

PD-ALB-1558

98370

The Mountain Institute

Strengthening NGO, Government and Private Sector Capabilities
for Community Based Bio-diversity Programs
in the Andes and Himalaya

Final Evaluation

December 1997

Project No 938-0158

Cooperative Agreement
No FAO-0158-A-00-5028-00

This report was prepared by AMA Technologies, Inc under contract number FAO-C-00-95-00036-00 with the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, Bureau for Humanitarian Response, USAID

Team Leader C Stark Biddle
Associates Martin Hewitt, USAID
Greg Pernier, USAID

Table of Contents

Acronyms	iv
Executive Summary	v
Introduction	1
1 Evaluation Approach and Methodology	2
2 The Purpose and Content of the Matching Grant	5
3 The Mountain Institute - Salient Characteristics	6
4 An Assessment of Performance - Country Projects	9
Peru	10
India	15
Nepal	20
5 An Assessment of Performance - Headquarters	24
6 Summary of Major Findings	37
7 Recommendations	42
 <u>Attachments</u>	
1 Scope of Work	
2 List of Individuals Interviewed	
3 Analytical Questions	

ACRONYMS

AAAS	American Academy for the Advancement of Science
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BHR	Bureau for Humanitarian Response
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
GB Pant	GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development
GEM	Global Excellence in Management
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PVC	Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
TMI	The Mountain Institute
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Mountain Institute Evaluation Executive Summary

This report constitutes a final evaluation of a three-year, \$1.5 million Matching Grant from the Agency for International Development's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation to the Mountain Institute headquartered in Franklin, West Virginia. Funds from the grant finance project activities in Nepal, Peru and India and support a number of headquarters' activities designed to strengthen institutional capacity. The basic purpose of the grant was to strengthen TMI and its stakeholders' organizational capacity to manage community-based bio-diversity conservation programs in the Andes and the Himalayas.

The purpose of the evaluation was twofold: to assess performance to date against anticipated results and to evaluate the overall impact of the grant on enhancing TMI's institutional capacity. In addition, it was hoped that the evaluation *process* would have a salutary effect on organizational growth and the approach was structured in a manner intended to achieve that result.

The Mountain Institute was established in 1972 and until 1992 was led by a strong founder/leader who had a forceful conception of where the organization should be heading and how it should proceed. In the early 1990s, the Institute went through a leadership crisis and transition involving a serious financial dilemma, the departure of the founder, the direct insertion of the board into daily operations, and the appointment of a new President and CEO with an international background, strong links to the international community and an interest in global environmental issues. During the last three years, in addition to expanding its international program activity, the Institute has devoted considerable time and energy to defining basic organizational vision, clarifying fundamental values, and developing styles of interaction that are positive and affirming, moving TMI toward a clearer focus on *mountains* as a common, unifying theme with a secondary emphasis on *conservation, community development and culture* as integrating elements.

The 1995 PVC Matching Grant came at a critically important time for the Institute. It supported TMI's emerging international focus, reinforced the new CEO's interest in international activities, and gave TMI a global perspective. In addition to supporting program diversification, the Matching Grant provided discretionary funds for building institutional systems and an opportunity to invest in organizational development and the strengthening of headquarters at precisely the time when it was most needed.

The evaluation identifies a number of organizational characteristics including: a diversity of program activity, a high degree of structural decentralization, considerable emphasis on program autonomy, a small and relatively modest program center, sensitivity to central planning and central oversight, an operating style characterized by an emphasis on consensus and participation, a program approach that puts considerable importance on the imperative of indigenous priorities and a high capacity to attract top quality staff.

The evaluation examines the three country projects with respect to consistency with original intent, technical approach, stakeholder relations, strategic design, replicability, institutional synergy, sustainability, cost effectiveness, and the quality of management. In all three cases the report concludes that the basic objectives of the grant are already or will be met and that TMI has been very effective at establishing working relations with local groups and getting projects up and running in a short period of time. The evaluation makes a number of observations regarding strategy, replicability, cost effectiveness and mechanisms that can enhance impact. Specifically,

While the individual activities are worthwhile and positive, the cost of operating in remote areas is quite high and the cost-benefit ratio is not attractive if benefits are measured solely on the basis of direct impact on beneficiary groups. TMI needs to be more proactive in the design and application of sequential project strategy that will have a structural impact and include a graduation strategy.

TMI can do more to define what it does in a modular and standardized fashion that permits and encourages critical analysis, provides a tangible basis for assessing performance and establishes a sound basis for long term institutional growth.

In general, TMI needs to deepen and strengthen its analytical capacity and to accord greater importance to a critical/analytical assessment of its work. This implies a deeper understanding of environmental issues prior to project launch, a tougher approach to sustainability, impact, cost recovery and replicability, more attention to what is in the pipeline after the facilitation and empowerment is over, a better understanding of economic incentives and disincentives and a strategic approach to project design and implementation.

The evaluation devotes considerable time to the headquarters strengthening and efforts to improve TMI's overall institutional capacity. Central findings are that

TMI has made considerable progress in designing and installing integrated financial systems and controls and a centralized budgeting capability.

The grant has given TMI the resources to strengthen internal communications, build organizational consensus and deal with difficult transitions. Much of the basic work on valuing and visioning has been accomplished and TMI is now at a point where it can engage in operational planning.

An important board development process has been initiated and needs to continue.

Despite considerable effort, TMI has not yet designed and installed a basic monitoring and evaluation system.

TMI has established a development office and has begun to fashion a fund raising strategy with mixed results. Some important rethinking, based on experience to date, is currently underway.

TMI needs to more clearly define the role and function of its headquarters with regard to field programs. As a corollary, TMI needs to identify ways to provide more managerial support to program staff.

With respect to the impact of the USAID/PVC grant, the evaluation concludes that

The Matching Grant has been of immense transitional value by providing stability, maneuvering room and resources needed to build organizational cohesion following a difficult leadership transition.

The fact that the grant has been administered in a flexible and adaptive manner permitting modification in grant objectives during implementation was fully appropriate and consistent with TMI's broad organizational purpose.

Finally, the grant proposal and the Detailed Implementation Plan periodically employed fashionable terminology and exaggerated phrasing that suggested a comprehensiveness and depth of impact that was slightly misleading.

With regard to basic program strategy, the evaluation notes that

The organization's interests and programs span a broad and diverse thematic landscape. While this diversity of interests is responsive to variable country conditions, it makes it difficult for TMI to build a distinctive comparative advantage and maximize the impact of scarce program resources.

TMI's geographically dispersed organizational structure, a deliberately modest role and set of functions for the center, a limited central capability to evaluate and backstop the technical content of field activities, and the absence of an integrating strategic plan combine to allow the organization to pull in too many directions and to make choice of strategic direction very difficult.

Despite TMI's identification with mountains and the elaboration of the core principles embedded in conservation, community and culture, the organization needs to do more to clarify its basic purpose.

The evaluation recommends that TMI initiate a careful program planning exercise that will clarify organizational purpose, take steps to insert an increased quantity of managerial "glue" to hold the organization together and improve its analytical capacity at all levels of the organization.

Introduction

This report constitutes a final evaluation of a three-year, \$1.5 million Matching Grant (or cooperative agreement) from the Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (PVC) to the Mountain Institute (TMI) headquartered in Franklin, West Virginia. Funds from the grant finance project activities in Nepal, Peru and India and support a number of headquarters' activities designed to strengthen institutional capacity.¹ The basic purpose of the grant was to strengthen TMI's and its stakeholders' organizational capacity to manage community-based bio-diversity conservation programs in the Andes and the Himalayas.

The purpose of the evaluation was twofold: to assess performance to date against anticipated results and to evaluate the overall impact of the grant on enhancing TMI's institutional capacity. In addition, it was hoped that the evaluation *process* would have a salutary effect on organizational growth and the approach was structured in a manner intended to achieve that result. (The Scope of Work is at Attachment 1.)

The evaluation was conducted during the summer of 1997 and included field visits to Peru, Nepal and India and participation in a monitoring and evaluation workshop in Elkins, West Virginia. Interviews (both in person and via telephone) were conducted with most of the TMI staff, several TMI board members and with cooperating organizations in the field. A list of those interviewed is at Attachment 2.

This report is divided into 7 sections, as follows:

- 1 Evaluation approach and methodology
- 2 The purpose and content of the Matching Grant
- 3 The Mountain Institute: salient organizational characteristics and challenges
- 4 An assessment of performance against plan: country projects
- 5 An assessment of performance against plan: headquarters component
- 6 Summary of major findings
- 7 Recommendations

¹ Although the life of this three-year grant was October, 1995 to October, 1998, this evaluation was scheduled for the end of the second year in order to provide insights and feedback to TMI prior to grant completion.

Section 1 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

Background

This is a final evaluation of a three-year matching grant. The date for the evaluation was advanced to the end of year two because the bulk of the funds under the grant has already been committed and because both PVC and TMI recognized that the results of the evaluation could have a bearing on future funding requests.

The evaluation was conducted by a core “team” comprised of an external evaluator, as team leader and principal report writer, the USAID/PVC Project Officer and a Public Policy and Diplomacy Fellow from the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) on assignment to PVC. The AAAS Fellow contributed a technical background in natural resource management to the team. In addition and as discussed below, staff of TMI also participated as “team” members during various phases of the work. Although widely discussed, the findings and recommendations set forth in this report are the responsibility of the core team.

The evaluation addressed two sets of questions. The first dealt with performance under the grant in comparison to original intent. The second focused on the overall growth and maturation of TMI from an organizational perspective. Because the subject of organizational capacity building can be ambiguous and difficult to define, a set of analytical questions was developed, distributed to TMI staff and used as a basis for discussions in the field. (See Attachment 3.)

The evaluation work took place from June through mid-October 1997. A visit to the Franklin headquarters and participation in a management and evaluation workshop occurred in June, the field visit to Peru was made in August and the trip to Nepal and India in September/October. This report was drafted in late October and preliminary findings were developed by the Evaluation Team and shared with TMI staff in early November. The final report was transmitted in mid-December.

Approach and Methodology

Because the approach that was developed for this evaluation is unique and has shaped the analytical perspective of the report, this section provides a brief discussion of the initial methodology and some of the conceptual difficulties faced by the evaluation team.

As originally conceived, it was hoped that this evaluation would provide both a factual assessment of performance against plan and an analysis of institutional capacity and organizational dynamics that would be useful to managers and relevant to TMI’s long term growth strategy. Thus, it was intended that the evaluation have both a “fact finding” and an organizational development component. In addition, it was felt that the insights into organizational performance would be of much greater practical benefit to TMI if the staff were actively involved in the evaluation process rather than having the analysis and

presentation of findings conducted solely by the outside evaluator. Thus, an *interactive and participatory approach* was used incorporating three elements. First, the evaluation team was structured to include members of TMI staff and the USAID/PVC project officer as active participants. Second, it was understood that all team members would have responsibility for drafting a portion of the evaluation report and that each would have a designated sectoral or thematic area of concern. Third, the team would meet following completion of the field visits and jointly identify and develop a set of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

As the evaluation unfolded, it became difficult to sustain a fully participatory approach, although important elements were preserved. The difficulties were threefold: first, it was not possible for logistical and scheduling reasons for TMI to locate and appoint a single staff member to participate in all three field trips; secondly, the thematic assignments proved to be inappropriate and excessively demanding on TMI staff who had substantial ongoing responsibilities; thirdly, the amount of time devoted to team planning was not adequate for team building or to develop an adequate level of comfort with the participatory concept.² At the same time, important elements of participation were preserved including self assessment meetings particularly in Peru and to a lesser extent in Nepal and India, preparation of brief reports on topics of interest from TMI participants and extensive interactive discussion and debate of a formal and informal nature between team members during the field visits. In addition, early and preliminary versions of the “findings” from the evaluation were circulated for comment to key TMI managers prior to the completion of the report and the final version incorporates reactions to that draft material. While this report is *not* a consensus document and the findings and recommendations are ultimately the responsibility of the core team, the principal themes that are developed in the following pages are themes that have been shared with and are familiar to all team participants and reflect in all cases points of view held by at least some of the staff at TMI.³

For this evaluation, it was agreed that the objectives that were set forth in the Detailed Implementation Plan (or “DIP”), which was prepared after the grant had been awarded, would provide a reasonable benchmark against which to examine subsequent performance.

² These difficulties were no fault of TMI who at all times were completely and fully cooperative and helpful.

³ The pros and cons of participatory institutional evaluations is a subject that deserves further study. One theory of organizational learning argues that evaluations that challenge the culture of the organization will not be understood or believed because they violate fundamental beliefs about the inherent nature of the world and trigger very strong defense mechanisms. It was clear to the team leader that in this instance much more time and effort should have been spent on team planning and on molding team cohesion and building an autonomous perspective. At the same time, the team leader believes that the extensive informal debate and discussion that did occur during the evaluation had a mutually beneficial two-way learning result.

In order to insure clarity with regard to evaluation standards, broad criteria for assessing organizational capacity were identified and set forth implicitly in a series of analytical questions that were distributed to the staff of TMI and that were used as a framework for discussion and debate during field visits (See again attachment 3)

The findings and analysis in the report are based on, and derive from, comments and judgments held by at least some of the TMI staff. While they rarely reflect a consensus view, the judgements echo to a large extent the “findings” of TMI’s own staff.

Finally, a considerable effort was made to share findings and opinions and recommendations with TMI staff prior to and in the process of drafting this report and to incorporate their views and concerns in the final version. In those cases where TMI staff differ with the analysis contained in the report and an accommodation has not been possible, the difference is noted in an explanatory footnote.

Caveats

The following are important caveats and limitations

This evaluation did not examine a number of field activities that are funded from other sources. The perspective is therefore derived primarily from an assessment of projects and activities funded by the PVC Matching Grant.

The field projects funded by the PVC grant in all three cases involve new starts and/or the pilot testing of new approaches. The evaluation team is cognizant of and appreciates the fact that new approaches should not be held to the same standard of sequential phasing and predictability applied to ongoing activities that are based on extensive prior experience.

The evaluation did not include a follow up trip to the West Virginia headquarters as originally planned. While telephone interviews were conducted, the full perspective of the headquarters staff may not be adequately reflected.

The evaluation does not attempt a full assessment of the individual projects that were visited but rather concentrates on certain attributes that yield insights regarding overall organizational performance.

While the evaluation was fortunate to have assistance from a range management specialist, this evaluation does not attempt to assess the scientific or technical validity of TMI’s work in conservation.

Section 2 The Purpose and Content of the Matching Grant

The purpose of the Matching Grant is to build local in-country capacity by directly supporting projects and by helping TMI become more effective. The stated goal of the Matching Grant is to

Increase in-country NGO, government and private sector capacity to design, implement and monitor effective community based bio-diversity conservation programs in the Himalaya and Andes in ways which result in empowered stakeholders, more effective conservation programs and significantly improved conservation of mountain bio-diversity and cultures ”

In order to progress toward this long term goal, the grant proposal envisioned support to two related sets of activities that are designed to support TMI. One set would support overseas program growth and diversification in three countries (Peru, India and Nepal), the second set would support and strengthen the maturation and growth of TMI's own organizational capacity. The two sets of activities were conceptually and operationally linked. On the one hand, the installation of supporting systems and increased organizational capacity was necessary to support program expansion, on the other, program expansion would increase the knowledge base and range of contacts intrinsic to a process of organizational change.

USAID/PVC matching grant funds were initially allocated as follows

Allocation of USAID/PVC Matching Grant Funds (In \$ thousands)

<u>Country</u>	<u>\$ Amount</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Peru	\$412	27.5
Nepal	\$295	19.7
India	\$253	16.8
Headq'trs	\$540	36.0
Total	\$1,500	100.0

Country activities focused on the building of capacity and on helping local institutions - - whether private or governmental - - develop the ability to make intelligent choices about the management and conservation of their natural resources. In Peru, the emphasis was on building capacity to monitor and manage conservation programs in and around the Huascarán National Park, in Nepal, the emphasis was on strengthening the country's capacity to design and implement eco-tourism projects in Langtang National Park. In

India, the focus was on management capacity and the design of economic incentives to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of an important trekking area

The headquarters component of the Matching Grant focused on areas believed to be critical to the growth and effectiveness of the organization. These included the design and installation of a planning, monitoring and evaluation system, the development of a rich array of partnerships and alliances with like-minded organizations, a concerted effort to strengthen financial sustainability through the installation of a Development Office and a program of board development and a more systematic and deliberate effort to “share the learning” by setting up internal information systems

The detailed goals and purposes of the grant are listed in the sections of the report that address performance against expectation. To give these objectives some meaningful life it is important to note the underlying concerns that shaped the content of the grant proposal at the time that it was put forward and that are relevant to several of the themes developed in this report

As discussed in Section 3 of this report, in 1995 TMI was at a critical transition point. The challenges facing the organization included shortage of discretionary funds to build organizational capacity, significant internal problems of morale and poor communication, an imbalanced and inadequately developed program structure, and absence of a strong institutional center that could provide coherent strategic direction to the organization. While the board, management and staff of TMI had taken steps to deal with these issues, the PVC Matching Grant was seen as a major opportunity to address these issues in a systematic and focused manner at a pivotal point in the institution’s history

Section 3 The Mountain Institute - Salient Characteristics

The Mountain Institute was established in 1972. The history and experience base of the organization is important to an understanding of its current orientation, structure and culture. Until 1992, TMI was led by a strong founder/leader who had a forceful conception of where the organization should be heading and how it should proceed. The Board was, in general, comprised of close friends and associates and played a relatively minor role in determining policy, providing administrative oversight or raising funds. Program expansion tended to be based on the personal interests and initiatives of individuals and the portfolio of activities tended to be differentiated and dispersed with a thematic core loosely related to mountain recreation, conservation, leadership development and community empowerment. The Spruce Knob Center served as both a recreational and symbolic center for the organization. Relations were informal, relaxed and personalized, communications tended to be centralized and controlled, management systems were loose or non-existent and financial controls were modest.

The international involvement of the Institute began in 1976 with the sponsorship of medical courses in Asia and Latin America. In 1984, the Institute expanded operations in Nepal with two conservation projects in the Everest area, and in 1985 it entered into a

large and important contractual relationship with the Nepalese Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation to jointly establish and manage the Makalu-Barun National Park and Conservation Area

In the early 1990s, the Institute went through a leadership crisis and transition involving a serious financial dilemma, the departure of the founder, the direct insertion of the Bboard into daily operations, and the appointment of a new President and CEO with an international background, strong links to the international community and an interest in global environmental issues. During the last three years the Institute has devoted considerable time and energy to defining organizational vision, clarifying fundamental values, and developing styles of interaction that are positive and affirming. Specifically, staff from the Institute have participated in the USAID-sponsored GEM (Global Excellence in Management) leadership development program with its emphasis on appreciative inquiry. This was followed by a series of workshops and planning seminars that have moved TMI toward a clearer focus on *mountains* as a common unifying theme, with a secondary emphasis on *conservation, community development and culture* as integrating elements.

Prior to the Matching Grant, TMI had one overseas office in Nepal, a small initiative in Tibet and a series of worthy but disconnected domestic environmental education and youth leadership activities managed from Franklin. The organization did not have a long-range strategic plan, had not established a development office to ensure a sustained and systematic approach to fund raising, and lacked an effective communication system and an integrated financial monitoring and reporting process.

The 1995 PVC Matching Grant came at a critically important time for the Institute. Coming one year after the arrival of TMI's new President, it supported TMI's emerging focus with an important infusion of international program money that reinforced the new CEO's interest in, and knowledge of, international activities and gave TMI a global as opposed to an Asian Regional perspective. In addition to supporting diversification in the Himalayas (Sikkim) and expansion to a new region (the Andes), the Matching Grant provided discretionary funds for building institutional systems and an opportunity to invest in organizational development and the strengthening of headquarters at precisely the time when it was most needed. It highlighted the need for a serious approach to development, underscored the importance of board strengthening and gave the new CEO the budgetary latitude to make her own important and positive imprint on the emerging shape of the organization.

The Institute currently has three principal program centers: the Himalayas, Peru and an Appalachian program in West Virginia. The overseas programs focus on park planning, eco-tourism, community training, organizational capacity building, income generation activities, and working with government and private groups to protect threatened natural resources. A recent successful program initiative involved the establishment of a global "Mountain Forum" in an attempt to bring environmental groups together to advocate for and influence international policy affecting mountain regions.

Considerable current emphasis is being devoted to a clarification and restructuring of the domestic or Appalachian Programs in an attempt to more tightly integrate these activities with the balance of the program and find reliable financial support. Within TMI there is broad agreement that there needs to be complementarity between domestic and international activities and that establishing this relationship is critical to the future of the organization.

As is the case with many organizations that are growing and shifting direction, the Mountain Institute is a complex and multifaceted organization. The Institute has several distinguishing organizational attributes that are relevant to this evaluation. Some of these are obvious, such as the dispersed organizational structure, others are ephemeral and difficult to define. The following is an incomplete overview.

A diversity of program activity Over the years, TMI's programs and activities have covered a broad terrain ranging from adventure/education programs for youth to the construction and support of a Spruce Knob Conference Center, to a sophisticated natural resource management project in the Himalayas.

A high degree of structural decentralization In addition to the dispersal that automatically comes with an international operation, TMI has a headquarters in Franklin, West Virginia, a meeting center an hour away in Spruce Knob, program directors resident in the Washington, DC, area and a CEO who conducts work from her homes in Virginia or Washington and through frequent visits to West Virginia.

Considerable emphasis on program autonomy Despite a system of centralized and somewhat autocratic leadership, the growth of TMI was driven by the imagination and energy of program staff. Field units operated with a relative degree of autonomy both with respect to strategy and implementation and with regard to the raising of program funds. It is important to note that the degree of oversight has increased in recent years, although the tradition and practice of autonomy remain to a lesser degree.

A small and relatively modest program center TMI does not have a formal "program office" or directorate of operations and until fairly recently has not provided extensive technical backstopping to field units. In fact, TMI takes considerable pride in not having a "bureaucratic" structure and in the promotion of direct communications between field units.

Sensitivity to central planning and central oversight TMI does not currently have an organization wide strategic plan - - although a board-directed effort has been initiated - - and field staff in varying degrees indicate concern regarding the imposition of a central plan that would establish tight parameters that would be insensitive to local realities.

An operating style characterized by an emphasis on consensus and participation In part as a consequence of the centralized and directive managerial style of the founder, in part because a consensual approach is viewed as intrinsic to TMI's basic program, the Institute staff place considerable emphasis on inclusion and on the process of consensus building. As a consequence, a considerable amount of time is devoted to discussion and deliberation and to the *process* of interaction ⁴

A program approach that puts considerable emphasis on the imperative of indigenous priorities This is an important characteristic of TMI and is rooted in the fact that TMI does not bring with it a top down model or off the shelf approach. TMI is an organization that is very much in a learning mode and project design is evolving on the basis of experience. The emphasis on local priorities reflects the high value placed on community and the fact that several key TMI staff come out of a community forestry background.

Capacity to attract very high caliber staff It is not simply gratuitous to note that TMI appears to have the image, style and set of organizational values that attract, motivate and retain high caliber staff.

Section 4 An Assessment of Performance Against Plan

This section of the report discusses performance against plan for the three country projects supported by the grant: Peru, Nepal and India. The discussion of performance for the headquarters component of the grant is addressed in Section 5. The baseline for gauging performance is derived from objectives enumerated in the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) unless otherwise noted.

To provide some basis of comparison, the discussion of each of the three country projects is organized in a common format loosely related to criteria frequently associated with project success. While this is by no means a comprehensive format and does involve some degree of overlap, it provides a common viewing perspective and standard base of comparison. The categories of discussion are:

Consistency with original intent An important characteristic of the Matching Grant to TMI was the provision of latitude to reasonably deviate from stated intent on the basis of insights and experience. At the same time, it is reasonable to ask whether the fundamental objective is being achieved or at least pursued.

⁴ While participation is important, many of the TMI staff simultaneously demonstrated their ambivalence by indicating varying degrees of concern regarding the large amount of time devoted to discussion and a desire for more structure and rapid closure.

Technical approach Whether the project is sound from a technical point of view

Stakeholder Relations The breadth and quality of relations with government, participating NGOs and private sector groups that have a stake in the project outcome or that can influence project impact

Strategic Approach Whether the underlying strategic framework is in place, appropriate and workable at the project, program and institutional level

Replicability Whether the project or program has a self-initiating multiplier potential - - will the approach or lessons learned spin off to other situations?

Sustainability Whether and to what degree the activity will have the organizational and financial capacity to continue on its own after TMI involvement ends

Cost Effectiveness A variant of sustainability - - whether the level of funding is justified by the anticipated result

Quality of Management

Institutional Synergy Particularly important in the case of a growing and changing organization like TMI. Addresses the question of whether the activity adds to the totality of what the organization is attempting to accomplish

This section does not attempt to repeat the documentary material that was contained in the quarterly and annual reports on project performance which were reviewed as part of the background reading for the evaluation

Peru

The goal of the Peru Project is to protect the Huascaran National Park by strengthening public and private sector capacity to manage bio-diversity conservation programs in that locale. Specific subordinate objectives that were enumerated in order to accomplish this goal included the establishment of a field office in Huaraz, the preparation of an eco-tourism management plan, the preparation of "model planning frameworks" for inter-institutional collaboration, provision of training in eco-tourism to NGOs and private sector user groups, the installation of a monitoring and evaluation system, the development of model strategies, and the general strengthening of skills in planning and financial and project management

Discussion

For TMI, the Peru initiative was important because it located TMI on another continent, provided a counterweight to the Himal program and underscored and validated the organization's commitment to international expansion and worldwide leadership in mountain conservation. As such, the expansion to Peru was part of, and integral to, a fundamental re-focusing of institutional goals.

The Andean program is currently focused on conservation of the Huascaran National Park through park planning and support to organizations that function within or are located proximate to the park boundary. The program was begun three years ago at TMI initiative and reflected a proactive decision to work in this area because of its extraordinary natural beauty and vulnerability to degradation from communities and user groups located adjacent to the park. Project components include design of a participatory park planning process, training in planning to NGOs and other private organizations and technical assistance in park planning. In addition, the project has supported an interesting study of economic resource values that may have important long-term implications for park management. To date, the project has focused primarily on the production of an eco-tourism plan for the Huascaran Park with provision of some training to NGOs and user groups. A considerable amount of time and staff energy has been productively devoted to complex and difficult political negotiations and bureaucratic maneuvering within the Department of Parks and with the parent ministry in order to cultivate support and cooperation.

The Project Officer and staff are located in Huaraz, eight hours by bus from Lima and contiguous to the Huascaran Park. The Andean Program Director is located in Lima but spends roughly one-third of his time in Huaraz. Although the Andean Program currently consists of one major activity, the staff are working hard to develop a long-range plan that envisions expansion to Bolivia and perhaps other Andean countries. While started by expatriate TMI staff, the Andean Program is currently fully staffed by Peruvians and managed by a Peruvian Program Director. Valuable assistance has been provided by motivated and technically competent volunteers.

Assessment

Consistency with Original Intent On balance, the Andean Program is on track with regard to achieving the objectives set forth in the DIP. An office has been established (actually a large and significant undertaking), good working relations with local and national park staff have been developed, an eco-tourism plan has been drafted, training curricula have been designed and a modest amount of training to NGOs and user groups has been offered. A very capable and highly motivated local staff have been recruited, organizational systems have been designed and installed and an organizational culture has been nurtured and developed. Finally, the Andean staff have been successful in raising additional funds from other donors for continued conservation programs in the area.

These accomplishments represent a considerable achievement in such a short period of time

However, the project has been slow to develop a usable, management friendly monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system or to yet develop modular strategies that can be used in other comparable situations ⁵ The staff indicate that these are important areas and indicate that they will receive priority attention during the balance of Project life

While the project is on track with respect to the specific objectives of the DIP, the evaluation team noted a subtle deviation from the original proposal which placed considerable emphasis on the establishment of “community based bio-diversity conservation programs” The Andean program is primarily a program of training, organizational development and park planning premised on the belief that organizational capacity has a downlink to conservation and wise resource choice Thus, Andean program staff do not “do” bio-diversity in a direct sense but rather attempt to create and promote an enabling environment for this to occur While the shift in emphasis is subtle and does not constitute a radical change in direction or non-completion of an important goal, it is indicative of the fact that the TMI program is emergent and adaptive and that the rhetoric of funding proposals sometimes deviates from subsequent application

Technical Approach To date, the project has concentrated on park planning, organizational training and environmental education While the evaluation team did not observe training sessions, the approach and the curriculum seemed appropriate and effective As noted above, the project as implemented does not directly include a significant bio-diversity component - - although conservation is a downstream result ⁶ The project does not promote particular bio-diversity strategies nor has it supported a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the environmental risks to the area

The team believes that over the long run, the Andean staff need to develop a sounder understanding of the major ecological risks to the Park and buffer zone in order to help them prioritize, better inform their work with park staff, NGOs and user groups and put teeth into their efforts to raise community awareness and ownership

Stakeholder Relations Andean Program staff have shown considerable initiative, imagination and political savvy in starting a program from scratch and developing constructive relations with park staff at the local and national level in a politically difficult and ambiguous atmosphere TMI staff were able to gain the respect and cooperation of both local and national park officials and developed a strong collaborative working relationship Andean Program staff have been adroit and creative in their

⁵ TMI notes that quarterly reports indicate that activities listed in the DIP have been monitored and evaluated on a regular basis While the evaluation team believes this to be the case, an integrated M&E system has not been established

⁶ TMI notes that the project was in part responsible for passage of important bio-diversity enabling legislation

capacity to network simultaneously at the local and national level and to use personal relations and contacts to maximum effect

Strategic Approach A defining hallmark of the Peru Project is that it was designed as it was implemented - - thus the difference between the program described in the proposal and the program described in the DIP. On the positive side, this speaks to the energy, agility and adaptiveness of the project staff and their capacity to devise solutions when faced with roadblocks and disappointments. At the same time, the evaluation team was struck with the difference in tone between the original proposal with its confident emphasis on “models” and strategies and an approach based on extensive institutional experience on the one hand, and the adaptive, flexible, and pilot-testing nature of what actually transpired. In fact, the Peru experience is a successful example of an emergent organization that is getting its feet wet with a new program, in a new culture where the difficult reality is vastly more daunting than the self-assured tone of the grant proposal.

A larger strategic issue relates to the future direction of the Andean Program of which Peru is one part. Andean Program staff are grappling with this question and have developed a long-term vision of their future abilities and multi-country program reach that was discussed with the evaluation team. In the view of the team, strategic growth will require

A rigorous assessment of natural resource management needs in the Andean region together with an articulation of selection criteria that would establish a convincing case for choice of regional program priorities

A clearer link between the Andean expansion strategy and TMI’s overall strategic direction than is currently in place

A deeper and more significant learning base from the current work in Peru. While the Peru Project has been successful in establishing good working relations and effective training interventions, the program is only just beginning to move past the planning and training stage to the introduction of community programs designed to ameliorate or stop natural resource degradation.

Replication The TMI proposal gave considerable emphasis to the existence and development of “model” approaches to community based conservation, and there are ample opportunities within Peru and/or the larger Andean area to apply the process that TMI has employed in the Huascarán. However, in the literal sense in which the word is used, the Peru Project has not yet generated an integrated, off the shelf “model” that can be adopted in other situations. This is in part because the project is new, in part because the approach does not lend itself to “modeling,” in part because the Andean staff have not had sufficient time to fully record their experiences.⁷ Whether and to what degree TMI

⁷ TMI notes that the TMI “model” involves a resolute determination to be driven by community and grass-roots priorities. This is an interesting point and underlines the high importance that TMI places on

should move toward a more modular or formulaic approach is complicated by the high priority the organization places on locally articulated priorities. This issue is discussed in various sections of this report. In general, the evaluation team would encourage TMI to move toward a more systematic package of phased interventions based on accumulated experience, while being responsive to community needs and priorities.

Sustainability With regard to project funding, the Andean staff have successfully leveraged funding from other donors, and relations with USAID/Peru are excellent and may lead to further opportunities for bilateral support. With regard to project activity, the focus to date has been on the development of an eco-tourism plan and a modest amount of training to NGOs and private organizations to raise their awareness of conservation issues. More needs to be done to identify other economically viable activities that will generate resources for the park and for the people living adjacent to it because the current level of eco-tourism itself is unlikely to provide the resources needed to ensure conservation of the park. This will be addressed in the second phase of the project.

Cost Effectiveness Cost effectiveness of the Peru Project will hinge on TMI's capacity to *institutionalize* attitudes and skills in those public and private sector organizations with which it is working - - maintenance of an ongoing service delivery capacity to continue to service the park staff and the small number of NGOs and private sector groups in and near the Huascarán Park is clearly not cost effective for the long term. To date, the Andean Program staff deserve high marks for their capacity to cultivate and sustain working relationships with key stakeholders. In the long run, these contacts need to be used to insert organizational capacities and altered attitudes toward resource management and community participation⁸.

Quality of Management and Administration The evaluation team was impressed with the technical credentials of the Andean program staff and with their high degree of motivation and commitment. The staff have devoted considerable effort to developing a strong organizational culture and appear to function smoothly as a team.

Institutional Synergy The project appears to fit within TMI's program mandate although the linkages are intuitive and, consistent with TMI's emphasis on program autonomy, have not been worked through in a formal or structured fashion. The Peru Project provides invaluable direct experience in park planning and working in a complex,

community based decision making and priorities. At the same time, the evaluation team believes that a successful community based approach has common elements that can be combined in modular form without simultaneously implying a rigid, "top down" approach.

⁸ In general, TMI staff in Peru (and also in the Himalayas) have an understandable primary focus on *their* implementation of the project. Over the long run it will be important for this emphasis to shift toward an emphasis on what is being left behind when the Project ends. More specifically, one of the things that the staff have not yet done is to think through an "exit strategy" that would identify those things that need to be done if TMI's work is to have a lasting legacy.

bureaucratic structure. Lessons learned from initiating and starting a demanding project from scratch will be important in comparable future situations.

While TMI has sponsored staff visits to Peru and supported a comparative study of approaches taken in Peru and Sikkim, it is the view of the evaluation team that more can be done to integrate the Peru Project into TMI's portfolio. This will involve more than a passive process of "sharing the learning" and will need to incorporate a deeper analytical understanding of what is being accomplished in Peru and how this relates to common attributes in other activities.

India Sikkim Bio-diversity and Eco-tourism Project

The goal of the Sikkim Project is to strengthen NGO, government and private sector capacity for community based bio-diversity conservation. The original DIP objectives were generating community interest and concern, increasing quality, diversity and market demand for environmentally sustainable products, and improving the policy environment and strengthening TMI's own managerial ability. The purpose structure of the Project has been recently revised to define expected results in explicit quantitative terms - i.e., an increase in the number of community initiated conservation projects, compliance with a conservation code of conduct, increased revenue from tourism, and increased household income from tourism and a specified number of positive governmental policy changes.

Discussion

The project is jointly implemented with the GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, an autonomous institute of the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests that conducts research and promotes sustainable development in the Indian Himalayas. Project elements include training for lodge owners and porters, education and support for a tourist organization, support to a community based environmental group, village clean up campaigns and development of a code of conduct. The remote project site includes the village of Yuksam, a trekking valley and the towns and lodges that radiate from that location. The project structure involves policy direction from the U.S.-based Project Director, direct oversight from a U.S.-based Project Manager (to be relocated to the Nepal Regional Office) and in-country supervision from a Project Officer. The relationship with GB Pant is innovative and may suggest a strategy for future projects - the Institute has designed and manages a sophisticated bio-system monitoring process. Ph.D. students assist in data collection and conduct applied research, while TMI provides expertise in training and community development.

The project is pursuing several related purposes including community development, promotion of environmentally friendly tourism, natural resource conservation and enterprise development. These are knit together through an explicit operative assumption that communities will conserve natural resources if there is an economic incentive to do so and if jobs and income are a perceived positive consequence. To date, the project has

engaged primarily in staffing and establishing a community presence, training and community development, an exchange study tour with the Langtang Project in Nepal, and the establishment of impact monitoring sites and support for local environmental groups

Assessment

Consistency with original intent To date it appears that the project has been successful in promoting the local conditions necessary for a growth in tourism and in raising awareness of the link between tourism and natural resource conservation

Accomplishments include the building of community awareness, improving lodge management, promoting higher standards of hygiene and trail cleanliness and improving services to trekkers. In addition, the project has generated community interest in resource management and in the importance of preserving the mountain heritage. There is anecdotal evidence that conservation attitudes and practices have changed since project inception. A small and energetic community based conservation group has been supported and appears to be functioning effectively, and an existing association of travel agents has been strengthened. Finally, bio-system monitoring sites have been established, although it is too early for the data to be meaningful. In sum, the basic project structure - relations, community interest, basic training, project monitoring - has been established

Promotion of local products linked to the preservation of bio-diversity, the development of markets for these products, an improvement in the overall policy environment and the building of “a knowledge base for the development of more effective, sustainable bio-diversity and conservation linkages in the Himalaya” are downstream objectives which will require further work⁹

Technical approach (The discussion under this heading is limited because the evaluation team was not able to directly visit project sites.) On the basis of participant comment and observed level of interest, the quality of training and facilitation appeared to be very good and to have generated considerable community enthusiasm. The application and integration of rural appraisal and appreciative inquiry appear to have been done in a balanced and pragmatic fashion. The establishment of ecological monitoring sites to measure impacts such as species loss or forest degradation gives this particular project a strong bio-diversity component and provides a significant opportunity to directly measure the environmental impact of community training. While there is some indication that scientific monitoring may have a longer time frame and a degree of sophistication that exceeds the social and economic goals of the project, the benefits of the partnership with GB Pant and the amalgam of social and scientific purpose are impressive and of considerable long-term potential to TMI.

⁹ TMI notes that in their view considerable progress has been made on the policy front - e.g., development of a knowledge base on how to get communities to act on eco-tourism opportunities, adoption of public hearings on tourism issues

Stakeholder Relations TMI's capacity to forge constructive links with partners and stakeholders in remote areas is impressively documented in the instance of the Sikkim Bio-diversity Project. It is evident in an open and constructive relationship with GP Pant, and from the interest and supportive comments from community groups and local officials. This is a stylistic and value rooted competence that is difficult to document but is a hallmark of TMI's effectiveness.

Strategic Approach TMI has developed an appropriate and effective approach to getting the project up and running in remarkably short order.

However, the evaluation team addressed and discussed two related issues with TMI staff. The first deals with the issue of "modeling," the second with strategic focus.

In part because the operative style of this and other TMI activities is to support self-reliance by facilitating and responding to community priorities, project activity tends to unfold in the absence of a top down guiding strategy. In an important sense, TMI does *not* have a *model* approach to community-based conservation that it imposes but rather a process of community empowerment that it facilitates. This poses two related dilemmas.¹⁰

The first is how (or whether) to move beyond process (facilitation, empowerment, community planning) to the transfer of specific strategies that will improve people's lives while simultaneously conserving natural resources. Thus, in the case of the Sikkim Project, there are several alternative follow through tactics that TMI might select that range from phase out (since community involvement and concern is considerable) to the provision of more sophisticated training to participant groups, to the introduction of agribusiness opportunities. Because TMI places great emphasis on community self-determination and relies on process rather than a product based model, it has not enunciated a formulaic approach or established a rigid set of *operational* guidelines. The downside of this approach is that the strategic flow and sequence of a project is not immediately apparent at inception. Thus in Sikkim (and also in Nepal and Peru) TMI is grappling with the question of "what next." While adaptiveness and redesign are inherently desirable characteristics of any development project, the existence of a conceptual framework for the life of project provides a basis for gauging success, ensures a reasonable degree of standardization among diverse activities and gives an organization a thematic center that will guide a diversity of administrative actions from employment decisions to systems design. Finding the right balance between adaptation and standardization is very difficult. On balance, the evaluation team would encourage TMI to move toward a more explicit "model" albeit retaining the core value emphasis on community determination.¹¹

¹⁰ An alternative view is that indeed this is not a dilemma if one assumes that community empowerment will be solely sufficient to lead to conservation and employment generating initiatives.

¹¹ A related dilemma is that an opportunistic approach to project design tends to divert attention away from the importance of developing an "exit strategy." While the term "exit" may overstate the terminal nature of a relationship, it is useful in that it focuses attention on the critically important question of what will be

The second related issue involves strategic focus. This is a tricky problem because the terminology is slippery and there is ample opportunity for miscommunication. In simple terms, the concern of the evaluation team is that the basic strategic structure of the project is unclear (This is a concern that applies to Nepal as well as Sikkim and perhaps to a lesser extent to Peru). Thus it is not fully evident whether the purpose is conservation and bio-diversity preservation, community development, eco-tourism, income generation, organizational capacity building, better park management or some creative amalgam of these and other goals. While it is possible to put these multiple objectives together in a pyramid of purposes that links bio-system preservation to conservation to economic incentive to eco-tourism, it was the view of the evaluation team that in practice this coherent structure was quite difficult to sustain and that at least to the outside evaluator, there was some significant question of primary intent.¹² This is a difficult issue because the evaluation team understands that in reality there are always multiple objectives regardless of the desire of funding agencies to collapse goals into a simple hierarchy. Nevertheless, in the course of the field trips for this evaluation, there was sufficient overlap and confusion to lead the team to conclude that at least in the next stage for each of these projects it would be important to be much clearer with regard to final purpose and result.¹³

Replicability Opportunities for *direct* replication of the Sikkim Bio-diversity Project are limited for several reasons: the project site is unique, the approach is facilitative rather than modular and the downstream phases of the project have not been designed. However, there are important future opportunities to partner with GB Pant in similar situations and to draw on the experience and lessons learned from Sikkim. In addition, the project can provide a laboratory of experience and a site for workshops, seminars and exchange programs.¹⁴

Sustainability There is some indication that some services (training, monitoring) can be continued through the auspices of the local environmental group now supported with project funds - - importantly, the project at an early stage established the precedent of charging a modest fee for training which materially increases the likelihood of financial sustainability. While the local group is small and untested, the leadership appears to be very competent and committed.

left behind when the project ends and what needs to be done in order to institutionalize the services offered by the project.

¹² A possible response to this concern is that symmetry of design is far less important than durable impact - the project should be judged on the basis of its effect on a host of desirable results including bio-diversity, the growth of eco-tourism, stakeholder income, etc. The problem with this approach is that performance measurement and the design of the next more sharply focused steps become very difficult.

¹³ TMI notes that the role of the PVO cannot be determined with any degree of precision until the community goals have been established by the beneficiaries themselves. To the extent that this is the case, it suggests an interesting and important conflict with USAID's emphasis on clear objectives and indicators.

¹⁴ TMI notes that for the next phase of the Sikkim Project, TMI has developed a proposal that will replicate this model elsewhere in Sikkim and in the Northeast Himalayan States of India.

Cost Effectiveness Cost effectiveness is difficult to assess because of indirect and secondary benefits that are hard to measure, such as the modeling effect on other NGOs and the potential benefits from workshops and exchange programs. Inevitably, projects in remote, mountainous terrain are expensive to administer, and where communities are small, per capita costs are high. This is certainly true in the case of Sikkim. In the long run, the full cost-benefit ratio of the project will hinge on its capacity to have a larger systemic impact either within India or as a pilot for similar applications in other mountain communities in other countries. Put differently, unless the Sikkim project can yield longer term structural impact of some sort, whether through direct replication, a change in the policy climate, or as a pilot for other projects, and regardless of its very positive impact on the people who live in the project area, the cost-benefit ratio as it currently stands would appear to be unfavorable.¹⁵

Management Personnel and Structure The evaluation team was impressed with the quality of the personnel associated with the project at all levels from Director to Community Assistant. Senior project staff have excellent technical training and impressive credentials, an extensive and sophisticated knowledge of India and considerable understanding of the political, economic and social situation in Sikkim. Local staff had developed excellent relations and respect in the community, were very knowledgeable about local conditions and demonstrated a refreshing capacity to be candidly evaluative of project strengths and weaknesses.

Until recently, both the Project Manager and the Project Director were located in the United States and made periodic field trips as needed. In the view of the evaluation team, this was a cumbersome structure that will be significantly improved by the planned relocation of the Project Manager to Nepal.¹⁶

Institutional Synergy The addition of the Indian Himalayas to TMI's mountain portfolio has, together with Peru, shifted the balance point of organizational emphasis and given TMI a predominant international orientation. The constructive relationship with GP Pant has provided an excellent template for engaging similar partner organizations in

¹⁵ This point echoes a more general concern. An opportunistic project strategy that unfolds as the activity is implemented is one that can benefit from learning lessons from changing conditions. The downside of this approach is that it does not yield model approaches that can be examined from the perspective of cost effectiveness or sustainability. An opportunistic approach is very good if the primary objective is to deliver services to a target population. It is less effective if the intent is to develop cost-effective modular approaches that can be used systematically on a wider basis to have a structural or systemic impact.

¹⁶ While beyond the direct scope of this assessment, the team believes that TMI will need to address the design of the field program structure. In Peru - - the newest and in some ways most vulnerable program - - the regional program is self contained and there is limited US-based oversight structure. In Nepal and Sikkim there is a tiered structure comprised of a Director in the United States with Project Managers in Nepal. While there is no particular merit to uniform organizational structures, in the case of Peru the evaluation team believes there is a question of adequate support and backstopping while in the case of Nepal/Sikkim there is a question of excessive layering.

other countries. Clearly, working in India, one of not the most important, challenging and complex developing societies in the world, is a feather in TMI's cap.

Nepal the Langtang Project

The goal of the project is to strengthen Nepal's *capacity* to design, implement and monitor eco-tourism programs in mountainous areas. The more specific objectives are to improve the planning and management capacity of NGOs, local communities and Park staff in the Langtang National Park, develop a community based eco-tourism plan for Langtang and produce planning guidelines for other mountain communities in Nepal.

Discussion

The project is based on the premise that there is a positive synergy between tourism and conservation - efforts in one can benefit the other. The primary focus is on improving the commitment of Langtang residents to conserving the attractiveness and natural environment, increase incomes from tourism and develop community conservation activities, including reduction in fuelwood use and community control of poaching and illegal timber cutting. Tourist Management Committees have been established and workshops have been offered in village planning, lodge management and eco-tourism. Exchange tours have been supported, and a strong working relationship has been established with the Langtang warden and park staff. Relations with senior park staff in Katmandu appear to be excellent. A buffer zone has been established adjacent to the park and recent legislation provides that 50 percent of generated revenues will be directly available to people living in the park's buffer zone for purposes of community development and conservation. These funds will not be available until an administrative system has been developed.

Assessment

Consistency with original intent. The DIP envisioned preparation of a Langtang management plan and an eco-tourism plan. The former appeared in hindsight to be excessively ambitious, and the two objectives have since been combined and now involve development of a "community based eco-tourism plan." Aside from this modification, the project is achieving the three objectives outlined in the revised Implementation Plan, i.e., building NGO and community capability to plan and manage community based eco-tourism, developing community eco-tourism plans, and developing guidelines for other communities.

In the view of the evaluation team, the project does not attempt to *directly* deal with issues of bio-diversity or conservation. While there may be conservation benefits, this is a

community development activity designed to promote eco-tourism through improved conservation practices ¹⁷

Technical approach With regard to community development and capacity building, the Project has involved a sequence of workshops designed first to build enthusiasm and create ownership and a motivating vision, then to provide specific suggestions and skills needed to make these plans come alive. Workshops combine elements of appreciative inquiry and rural appraisal. The approach - - visioning, community mapping, action planning and “para-wise ranking” - - appears to be effective. Members of the community are interested, motivated and knowledgeable, and there is anecdotal evidence that tourist facilities and services have improved markedly. It is too early to determine whether and to what degree this will lead to a direct income benefit to participating groups.

With regard to conservation objectives, there is anecdotal evidence that trails are cleaner, firewood consumption reduced and sanitation facilities improved. Whether these benefits address critical long-term issues is difficult to determine because an environmental assessment has not been prepared ¹⁸

Stakeholder Relations The project has established excellent relations with park staff and with various community groups instrumental to project goals. In addition, staff in Katmandu have very good working relations with senior officials at the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation.

Strategic Approach While the project is having a positive impact on people in the Langtang and individual components - - training, park relations, NGO collaboration - - are very effective, the team believes that structural impact could be enhanced if greater emphasis were given to a more strategic approach. There are two related sets of issues. The first deals with several specific elements that would guide project choices and provide a basis for the development of a model approach. The second deals with strategic focus.

The evaluation team believes that the project is lacking in certain analytical elements that could strengthen impact. These include

A need for baseline assessment of tourism and environmental threats to the area that would allow the development of a more convincing analytical case to undergird the project’s core hypothesis.

¹⁷ It is pertinent to note that TMI disagrees with this point and argues that conservation is the primary goal of the activity. The difference in perspective is noted not to engage in debate but because it underscores a theme that is stressed in this evaluation regarding the importance of greater clarity with respect to the structure of goals and objectives.

¹⁸ TMI notes that the Langtang Project has benefited from prior study and that project design relied on the results of these studies.

A more deliberate and direct link between training at the local level and policy action reform at the national level. In particular, it will be critically important to design and manage an effective system to administer the very large amounts of land that may become available to Langtang communities as a consequence of the new Buffer Zone legislation.

Supporting analysis that would provide a stronger understanding of the financial realities of the tourist industry and lodge operation and that would include a capacity analysis for Langtang.

A sequential staging of interventions over the life of the project from formative community development to skill building, to capacity building and sustainability of intermediaries, to phase out and ultimate exit.

The second set of issues involves some confusion over basic project purpose and echoes the discussion under the Sikkim Project. As in the case of Sikkim, the Langtang activity pursues a number of purposes including community empowerment, income generation, eco-tourism, conservation, capacity building, the strengthening of cultural heritage, etc. Without repeating the discussion under Sikkim, on balance the evaluation team believes that as the Langtang Project moves into its second stage, it will be very important to work through the relationship among these purposes in order to select and shape the types of interventions that will be most effective in having an impact.

Replicability The “roll out” potential of the Langtang Project is not immediately clear. The project does call for the preparation of a manual of guidelines that will be useful to others in comparable situations. While the implementation plan suggests that the Langtang experience may have useful application elsewhere, it is not immediately certain why this should be the case or how the insights and experience from Langtang will be packaged and transmitted to other locations. Tighter linkages at the national level could enhance this so that community based planning could flourish in other areas.

As noted in several points in this evaluation, TMI places considerable emphasis on “delivering services” which it does quite well in Langtang. However, TMI needs to place greater emphasis on strategies that will yield systemic or structural impact.

Sustainability The prospects are mixed. Close involvement of local park staff, their understanding of project goals and TMI’s approach, and the likely availability of funds from the Buffer Zone management plan suggest that the training support to communities and tourist groups is likely to continue. On the other hand, park staff turnover is high and unpredictable, participating NGOs have tightly limited resources, community groups may not opt to use their new funds for conservation or community development purposes and the utility and relevance of - and as a consequence the demand for - further follow on work may not materialize. While much of the organizing spadework has been done and while there is considerable local interest and enthusiasm behind the twinning of tourism and conservation, it will be important to identify specific problems and suggest specific

revenue-generating solutions. A clear danger is that the enthusiasm and expectations generated by recent community development work will quickly erode unless there are perceived tangible benefits. If TMI wants to assure a long term sustainable impact, it will have to develop a phased intervention strategy that is based on a comprehensive assessment of social and economic need. One strategy may be to concentrate on the Department of Parks and Conservation at the national level in an attempt to institutionalize a regular program of community training. Another may be to offer increasingly sophisticated training to tourist groups in marketing, financial management and business strategy. A third may be to develop alternative conservation-friendly agribusiness opportunities.

Cost Effectiveness Absent significant replication, either as a model that can be adopted elsewhere, or through broadened self generating application within the Langtang Valley, the per capita cost of the project is high. Although the Langtang is a remarkable area and certainly worthy of preservation, its remote and difficult location, the need to transport trainers for a full day's drive over hazardous roads and the 2-3 day trekking approach present formidable obstacles. Long run concerns regarding cost effectiveness will decline to the extent that TMI develops a specific strategy to gradually turn over training to the park and to local NGOs.

The Structure and Quality of Management The evaluation team was impressed with the high competence, motivation and commitment of all project personnel. Expatriate staff (Director and Project Officer) were bilingual, very knowledgeable about local customs and cultural practices and demonstrated a sensitive capacity to understand and relate in a constructive and purposeful way to the needs and capacities of the groups and communities that they were working with. Local park staff were impressively well trained and had a solid grasp of project objectives. Participating NGOs were professional, committed and well trained.

The Langtang Project is one of several activities managed from TMI's Regional Office in Katmandu but under the direction of the Director, Asian Environmental Programs, based in the United States. The Himal Program (as it is called) operates with considerable autonomy and has been quite successful in raising funds for its programs without extensive support from headquarters. During this evaluation, questions arose regarding the nature and content of the field/headquarters relationship. Understandably, the Himal Program would prefer to maintain its independence and avoid the imposition of reporting and monitoring requirements that are time consuming and perceived to have only modest direct regional benefit. At the same time, the importance of program compatibility, institutional planning and the design of financial strategy argue for effective central oversight. In this regard, an important crosscutting organizational question for TMI is whether stronger and more directive program guidance from the center can improve project design and implementation by challenging implicit assumptions, stressing the importance of a phased strategy and emphasizing structural or systemic impact. This is not to argue that these viewpoints cannot develop when a program is autonomous from the center. However, when a project is close to the beneficiary, there is an understandable

tendency to accord high importance to the direct delivery of tangible services rather than emphasize larger strategic concerns. The team believes that the Langtang Project is a case in point.

Institutional Synergy The Langtang Project has provided an opportunity to design and test a training approach that can be usefully employed in other TMI activities. The project has also surfaced important issues regarding the assumed positive relationship between tourism and conservation, and it has given TMI further opportunity to work with national and local park staff. In designing the project, TMI drew on its direct experience in nearby Makalu-Barun.

However, perhaps the most important institutional benefit to TMI of the Langtang Project is that it raises long term questions of program content and strategic direction that will encourage TMI to think deeply about the content of what it does and how it does it. The central issue for Langtang is “what next” beyond the skillful community development that has already been initiated. In broad terms, the evaluation team believes that follow through efforts in Langtang will need to be rooted in an assessment of conservation issues including carrying capacity, an economic analysis of the impact of tourism and a phased intervention that will build on these findings and the successful community development work that has already occurred.

Section 5 An Assessment of Performance - Headquarters

A specific component of the Matching Grant was devoted to headquarters strengthening. The four goals of that component were: to design and install a planning, monitoring and evaluation system and capability, including a stronger financial system as a first step, to identify and strengthen strategic partnerships and alliances, to “share the learning” through more effective exchange of information, and to strengthen the prospects for revenue sustainability through the design and establishment of a development office, the strengthening of TMI’s board of directors and the installation of integrated, organization-wide financial controls and monitoring.

This section discusses performance against these four goals, as well as several larger long-term questions that emerge logically from a discussion of the role and development of headquarters.

Discussion

The Detailed Implementation Plan is candid with respect to some of the fundamental challenges that faced TMI in early 1993 *prior* to the selection of a new CEO. They include better integration of the organization, articulating a coherent method (or “model”), developing funding initiatives that would strengthen the financial base, supporting and strengthening the management of existing programs and developing long term program strategies. The headquarters component of the grant was designed to deal with these challenges.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

The DIP set forth a long and ambitious list of objectives and activities under the goal of a better planning and M&E system. In summary, the intent was to design and install a monitoring and evaluation structure, an integrated program planning process, and a supporting budget review and reporting system.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) TMI has had difficulty in designing and installing a simple and useful organization-wide M&E system despite a considerable expenditure of time and effort. At the country and project level, TMI devotes careful attention to the preparation of project reports and there has been an effort, particularly in Sikkim, to use measurement data and to relate project progress to established benchmarks. However, TMI has not yet fully integrated these reports or developed a common set of progress indicators that would aggregate at the objective level, gauge organizational progress, encourage comparative analysis and be useful for senior managers or for purposes of long-range strategic planning. To be balanced, TMI deserves credit for supporting a series of workshops on M&E and for considerable effort at data collection and reporting on behalf of individual projects. TMI staff are vocal in their support for a user-friendly M&E system that would monitor progress and encourage analysis and self-evaluation, and the difficulties in this area are not for want of trying.

There are several reasons why TMI has found the installation of an M&E system so difficult. The reasons are indicative of some of the larger organizational challenges that TMI faces. They appear to include:

The difficulty of establishing a central monitoring mechanism in an organization with a high premium on program independence. In a decentralized organization, a central monitoring system is often seen more as a mechanism to ensure compliance than as a source of data to better understand program effectiveness. To add to this, field units are often skeptical that a central system will have significant utility for their program - - an understandable concern to the extent that there is insufficient analytical capacity at the center.

The problem of non-comparability among projects. TMI's overseas projects, while knit together on the basis of a mountain focus and by an emphasis on community, conservation and culture, are - - as a result of TMI's stakeholder-driven approach - - singularly diverse with regard to technique and process. The lack of commonality between international activities and certainly between the international and domestic program, makes the design of an integrated system very difficult.

The absence of a strong program center with authority and responsibility to put an M&E system in place. Regardless of strong desire, good will and extensive discussion, an integrated organization-wide M&E system is unlikely to

be installed until there is clear and unambiguous assignment of responsibility for its design and maintenance

Excessive complexity Finally, it was apparent to the evaluation team that the subject of monitoring and evaluation has been intellectualized and overcomplicated and discussed to the point where its practical utility to managers and to the organization as a whole has been obscured ¹⁹

Planning On the financial side, TMI has made considerable progress toward the development of an integrated program budgeting and financial planning system together with a related set of variance reports that managers can use to monitor budget commitments and performance against budget plan

With regard to *organizational development planning*, the Matching Grant (and also previous support from PVC) supported a number of workshops and retreats that have had a very significant positive impact on TMI and that have helped the organization establish a stronger sense of internal cohesion and partnership, move through a difficult transition period and constructively address some of the dysfunctional behaviors that were undercutting performance. These interventions have been focused primarily on identifying core ideology and on clarifying core values and principles and developing styles of personal interaction compatible with TMI's basic organizational makeup ²⁰. They responded to the need for stronger organizational coherence and to a diffusion in program focus that had developed prior to the leadership transition.

¹⁹ During the evaluation, there was considerable discussion as to whether TMI possessed an organizational culture that was conducive to learning. This is a difficult and ambiguous subject because of the different meanings of "organizational learning" and the rather fuzzy nature of the concept. In general, the staff of TMI seem to be open to new ideas and there was broad agreement that internal debate is strong and active. At the same time, TMI staff in several instances noted that discussions were unproductively prolonged and that sometimes TMI would get "stuck" on an issue. One of the basic tenets of organizational learning is that organizations need to be able to question fundamental assumptions if they are to develop new perspectives. In organizations with highly consensual operating styles that place value on supportive and affirming interactions, there is the risk of discouraging the type of direct confrontation that challenges conventional wisdom.

²⁰ The nomenclature on organizational development is rich with confusion. This discussion attempts to avoid the USAID terminology because words like "goals" or "objectives" have carefully defined meaning in the USAID lexicon. Briefly, "ideology" describes the fundamental reason for the organization to exist and in TMI's case it is probably mountain conservation. The term "ideology" is used deliberately because it is a powerful term that can carry both positive and/or negative connotation - - thus an organization, like any society, can be blindsided by its ideology. "Beliefs" describe the way the world is perceived and how it is believed to operate, "values" are the ethical norms that are commonly held by the staff. Organizational "purpose" describes what the organization is trying to accomplish, is more tangible and descriptive than ideology and is normally encapsulated in a mission statement. "Core competencies" are what an organization does to pursue its purpose and "basic operating practices" describes the surrounding style or process that the organization employs - - in TMI's case it might include a proclivity to "stay at the table" rather than pursue a high profile, activist approach.

In general these planning efforts have *not* constituted what normally falls under the rubric of “strategic planning” in the operational sense of structuring activities, instrumentalities and grounded strategies in a framework based on a hard headed assessment of opportunities and challenges. While the work on ideology and value identification has been very valuable, the evaluation team believes that it is critically important for TMI to now move toward a more structured planning effort that establishes a clear programmatic purpose, a set of core competencies and that nails down the fundamental operating principles that distinguish TMI from other conservation groups. While it is TMI’s responsibility to design and structure the process, the evaluation team believes that a planning process for TMI needs to address four critical issues:

Greater clarity with regard to organizational purpose TMI has made considerable headway in moving toward a clearer conception of purpose but more needs to be done to establish a guiding framework that will give cohesion and direction to the design of individual project strategies and help the organization make informed future staffing decisions. As discussed above, in all three countries visited by the evaluation team, projects were at a transition point requiring important decisions about future direction.²¹ Key decisions included among many whether TMI should move directly into small and/or medium enterprise development, to what extent should TMI have internal scientific expertise in the management of bio-diversity, to what degree should TMI gear up to provide advanced training to cooperating NGOs.

Identification of areas of core competence or basic *product* components It is important for TMI to be much clearer about exactly what skills, expertise and program strategies it brings as an organization to its work in mountain conservation. As noted in the discussion of country projects, while values are similar, program focus, approaches and strategies are quite different. While the staff and leadership of TMI deserve much credit for their work on clarifying ideology and values, they need to address the very difficult question of program tactics. This will involve a difficult and protracted discussion with field units and a concerted effort to identify program commonalities and to hammer out a clear picture of exactly what TMI should be doing.²²

It is important to emphasize that this type of program planning need *not* lead to standardization or homogeneity. And in fact, TMI may wish to find strategic

²¹ TMI quite correctly notes that all three funded projects are quite new and of an experimental and pilot nature. Thus the impression of a splintered and diffuse purpose is exaggerated if one limits the assessment to only these activities as is the case with this evaluation.

²² TMI’s comment on the draft report makes this same point in strong and compelling terms by noting that what TMI lacks is the existence of a critical mass of technical/professional expertise at the center that can serve to ensure that the key elements and best practices are truly integrated in project design and implementation, that can challenge the programs regarding their approach and the “fit” between organization objectives and individual activities, and can monitor impact and feed that information back into future planning and implementation.

value in diversity in its capacity to adapt a common set of values to different situations. However, whether integrated or diffuse, it is important that TMI identify the program instruments that emerge directly from TMI's purpose and values and how these will be deployed. This exercise has important practical implications with regard to long-term staffing strategy, the functions of headquarters and relationships with the field, the role of the development office and the formulation of a fund raising strategy. It will have direct bearing on the specific country programs and long-range growth plans for the Andes and Himal programs and others.²³

Identification of basic operating practices In a related vein, the evaluation team believes that TMI would benefit if it were more explicit about basic operating principles. While the values and beliefs have been identified, TMI has not gone the next step of developing a "practices manual" which would provide guidance but also be a repository of experiential learning. While publication of a manual may not be needed, it is important that over time TMI move to a point where staff can confidently say "This is the way we do it at TMI."

During the evaluation, the team noted that despite the protracted talk of "sharing the learning" there was a need for more analytical effort to critically explore experience and identify "lessons learned" and to get this information up on the board and into the basic operating practice of the organization. While the team was impressed with the capacity and inventiveness of individuals and the considerable positive impact of funded projects, achievements seemed to be occurring despite the system not because of it.²⁴

The role and function of the program center Whether or not an organization needs a strong programmatic center depends on the technical nature of the work, the degree of program diversity, the importance of analysis and research, the perceived value of synergy, and management's tolerance for autonomy. The outlying units of most decentralized organizations prefer autonomy from the center because they believe they have a deeper understanding of the local conditions that will influence success. TMI does not currently have a strong and

²³ It is important to point out that while ideology and core purpose change very slowly if at all, the content of an organization's core competence or "product mix" changes with shifting needs. Thus, an elaboration of core competence proceeds from an assessment of current skills and capacities in the context of need and what other organizations are doing.

²⁴ Two specific examples. In Peru and to a lesser extent in Himal, there is a common practice of "staying at the table" when working with government officials regardless (within reason) of policies and practices that might otherwise be anathema. This is a defining characteristic of TMI but it needs to be elaborated, better defined and more fully ingested. In the Himal Program, there is considerable knowledge of, and emphasis on, the conservation practices that emerge from the principles of community forestry. It struck the evaluation team that this perspective was valuable and innovative and very much aligned with core values, but that the practical operating implications needed to be more deliberately inserted into the TMI structure.

guiding programmatic center, and in fact there is considerable debate within the organization regarding the wisdom of creating such an entity

The Evaluation Team does not have a conclusive view with regard to the role of the center from a *structural perspective*. However, the team does believe that there are certain *functions* that are traditionally performed by a program center that will need to be performed regardless of whether a program unit is established at headquarters. These functions include

Program analysis This includes more than “sharing the learning” and implies a capacity to analyze trends, identify patterns and question conventional approaches. It also suggests a responsibility for challenging the field units to produce supportive analysis. Because of the complexity of development work, most organizations need some analytical capacity as a basis for program redesign and change. The need for analytical capacity is particularly great at TMI because the program (at least that supported by the Matching Grant) is in a formative state and there is considerable work that needs to be done to think through next steps and follow-on approaches.

Managing the planning process As used, the word “planning” means the ongoing process of program renewal - - strategy, integration, local planning, project design - - and the principal emphasis is on management of that process. As suggested, it will be very important for TMI to move forward with a carefully designed operational planning process. The design and management of that process is critically important and needs to be unambiguously assigned.

Facilitating the program decision making process Most development organizations need an internal staff capacity to support critical program decisions involving budget and staffing allocations and the sculpting of program priorities. This involves a capacity to look at the pros and cons of alternatives against a set of selection criteria that is derived from the organization’s basic charter and approach. More broadly it implies a responsibility for ensuring program integrity in the face of limited resources and competing demands for staff and budget resources.

TMI devotes considerable effort to staff retreats, conferences, periodic team building and ad hoc staff meetings. These have been important because of geographic dispersal, the decentralized operating structure and the need to deal with past issues of internal divisiveness. During the evaluation, there was repeated concern that while these past efforts have been very valuable, TMI now needs to move to a more structured and efficient decision making process that draws on its considerable data base and derives from stronger analytical capability.

Technical support Most central program units do not provide much technical support to field units and the need for this capability tends to be overstated. Nevertheless, there is periodic need for help in locating a technical consultant or a particular study. A more important function involves an assessment of whether a field program has an appropriate internal level of technical competence.

Studies and research An important adjunct to program analysis, planning and decision making is the capacity to identify the need for research and special studies.

Strengthening partnerships and alliances

The second goal of the headquarters portion of the grant was to build a stronger fabric of supportive relationships with a broad assortment of potential partners and collaborators. This was important because TMI was a small, emergent organization in a remote location and needed resources to cultivate the contacts, networks and relationships that would be needed to build a funding base, identify teaming relationships and influence the content and direction of international development and conservation priorities. Under this goal was a long and diverse list of activities loosely related to external contacts.

It is difficult to evaluate whether and to what extent the fundamental purpose has been achieved because of the vague nature of the goal and the diversity of envisioned activities. The last quarterly report stated that the partnering goal had been “accomplished” and noted that “partnering has become a way of thinking and acting” at TMI. In general, the evaluation team would concur with this self-assessment.

With regard to working partnerships, TMI is good at reaching out and working with other private and public organizations as evidenced in relationships with GB Pant (India), INRENA (Peru) and the Ministry of Parks (Nepal). The team relation with GB Pant is particularly interesting and may provide a model that can either be duplicated elsewhere or expanded upon in the Indian Himalayas. With regard to larger environmental policy issues, TMI has initiated the so-called “Mountain Forum” designed to bring advocacy groups together in a forum to discuss common policy concerns and develop agendas for global action. Regardless of whether this initiative has had an impact on international policy toward mountainous areas, it has positioned TMI as a leader in this field and helped with name recognition and enhanced credibility.

With regard to the building of contacts linked to strengthening the financial base of support, it is difficult to determine how successful these efforts have been. In general, the cultivation of funding relationships is a long and arduous effort and non-profits frequently underestimate the amount of time and careful effort that will be required to nurture a level of confidence that will lead to financial support. The issue of development is discussed in the following section.

While TMI is effective in forging working relationships and working cooperatively with partners, it will need increasingly to deal with the larger question of what constitutes institutional capacity building and what strategies need to be put in place to ensure that it occurs during the course of a relationship with an NGO partner. There have been several studies of capacity building that suggest that partnership relations evolve through several linked stages, that the terminal stage is in some ways the most important and that some form of long-term association can be very effective. Whether or not there are predictable stages in a relationship or whether these apply to the types of organizations that TMI works with is less important than the existence of a philosophy and a set of guiding principles. Capacity building, albeit an ephemeral concept, involves much more than working collaboratively together. The concept implies the transfer and adoption of specific skills and attitudes associated with organizational success. If TMI is to be fully effective in developing and leaving in place enhanced institutional capacity - - as it claims it will do in the Matching Grant - - then it needs to put down a program and an approach for making this work.

Sharing the learning

A goal of the Matching Grant was to increase the internal and external sharing of information about what TMI does and how it does it. Funded activities included more and better internal reporting, the development of a newsletter, establishment of a publications office and public relations effort, and design and installation of an internal electronic communication and information system. Thus the rubric “sharing the learning” supported a series of activities related to improved management, team building and public relations and fund raising. Despite the emphasis on “learning,” the emphasis was *not* on program analysis and research but on the facilitated flow of information and a sharing of best practices. Accordingly, the Sharing component was placed first under the jurisdiction of the information officer and subsequently under the advancement office.

Most of the individual activities under this goal have been funded. A project reporting system was put in place, a newsletter was created, a publication office was established and an improved electronic communication system has been installed. In addition, TMI staff have engaged in a series of conferences, workshops and meetings designed to share information and develop common strategies. To the extent that the fundamental purpose of this component of the grant was to facilitate and increase the *flow of information*, the evaluation team believes it has been successfully accomplished.²⁵

²⁵ To their credit, many of the staff of TMI have participated in the USAID-sponsored GEM training program with its emphasis on a style of internal organizational interaction that has been called “appreciative inquiry.” For some this has been an important experience and appreciative inquiry has provided a powerful and useful technique. In the field, appreciative inquiry has been integrated with techniques of rural appraisal and the results are very positive. Internally, views are mixed and there are strong feelings regarding the pros and cons of this approach. To simplify the value of appreciative inquiry is that it is affirming, creates a very positive atmosphere, encourages spontaneity and self expression and may help organizations devise creative solutions and articulate clearer visions of their future than would

The subject of organizational “learning” suggests three related issues that the evaluation team believes TMI will need to continue to address as it grows and develops. These are variants of themes developed elsewhere in this report but have particular resonance when linked to the concept of learning

How much analysis? At a minimum, development agencies need sufficient internal analytical capacity to design and then manage good individual projects. For TMI, the question is whether “organizational learning” simply involves the passive transmission of data and information between program units or is it necessary to insert analytical and interpretive capacities that will identify patterns and challenge assumptions? The conventional wisdom suggests that organizations erect strong cultures to protect against new paradigms and that a deliberate attempt needs to be made to insert skepticism into most organizational systems. However, this may involve an adversarial approach to information sharing that may be an anathema to TMI’s values

Who manages the system? Does TMI need a central transmission point for analysis and communication or perhaps “ in a growing organization like TMI, with such a strong emphasis on field activity and a relatively remote HQ office, field offices may not have as much need of HQ as an information source as would be expected in other more centralized organizational structures. The older, centralized models of organizational management may become increasingly obsolete ”²⁶ The alternative conventional view is that growing organizations very much need a strong headquarters presence with a critical mass of core expertise in order to maintain order and sustain focus as the organization goes through the volatile process of maturation. The down side is that a central transmission point can be seen, and in fact can become, a censor on the flow of information

What’s important What and how much information needs to be shared and for what purpose? Perhaps because of a history of centralized direction and a proclivity toward non-sharing of information, TMI currently places considerable importance on openness and transparency - - and of course these are intrinsically desirable organizational attributes. However, the consequence of an open sharing policy is frustration that the system does not and cannot openly provide “ *all*

otherwise be the case. The drawback is that if mishandled, appreciative inquiry can discourage critical analytical thinking, create inflated expectations, promote a sense of unreality and increase the level of ambiguity to intolerable limits that for some exacerbates anxiety. While the team leader for the evaluation has significant reservations regarding the long term utility of the process, on balance it is the conclusion of the evaluation that if it works for TMI, that’s fine. We would argue, however, that some of the language of appreciative inquiry has a zealous tone and is off-putting and should be dropped while the substance of intent is retained.

²⁶ TMI Headquarters report for the period October 1, 1996 - June 30, 1997

staff members with access to *all* information from *throughout* the organization”²⁷
(Emphasis added)

Development

An important objective of the Matching Grant was to improve the financial health of the organization by establishing a development office, and by more actively engaging the board of directors both in a fiduciary and advisory capacity with respect to direct financial support. Anticipated activities involved a series of board retreats, systematic attempts to increase board interest and enthusiasm, establishment of a development (or “advancement”) office and the development of the basic components of a preliminary fund raising strategy.

Board strengthening This evaluation has deliberately not focused extensive attention on board development and the team leader spoke briefly with only four of TMI’s board members. In general, developments appear to be positive. A revised set of by-laws has been drafted, a committee structure has been designed and established, several new board members have been recruited and a series of meetings and board retreats has taken place. The board has recently become seized with the importance of long-range planning and has also demonstrated leadership with regard to restructuring the Appalachian Program. There has been a concerted and successful effort to more fully and effectively involve the board in fund raising and the extent and amount of financial support from the board has been rising. Limited discussions with board members indicated a high degree of energy, commitment and enthusiasm. The following constitute *minor* concerns and questions. In general, the team was impressed with the constructive work that has been accomplished.

A challenge that any quickly changing organization will have to address is that the board can get quickly out of date with regard to changing program priorities. While ideology and values should stay constant and purpose should shift slowly, the content of what the organization does will be constantly adapting to changing conditions. It is easy to underestimate how much time and persistent effort is needed to keep a board abreast of program changes. In TMI’s case, several members of the board have had an intimate association with the program and a very personal connection with the history of the organization. This level of involvement is a precious resource but can at the same time lead to tensions when changes in direction are not adequately worked through.

While the TMI board is composed of very capable individuals, the roster does not include people with extensive scientific or technical environmental experience or credentials. Whether and to what degree this is desirable depends on the outcome of the planning effort recommended by the evaluation. This relates to a more general point that efforts to restructure boards should start from and be based on a candid assessment of strengths and weaknesses and derive from a picture of what

²⁷ Ibid

the future board should look like A board development plan should be a written document that is periodically reviewed and updated and that becomes part of the board's intentional direction

Finally, the team was surprised that the revised by-laws did not establish a *standing* committee with responsibility for development The financial health of the organization is a key board responsibility While the development function can be handled on an ad hoc basis, it deserves a permanent structure

Fund-Raising

TMI has had considerable difficulty in getting a development effort designed and launched These difficulties and frustrations are absolutely *not* unique to TMI or the consequence of personal performance If there is one universal management problem that besets small, growing non-profits, it is the design and insertion of a development office into a decentralized structure ²⁸

The following summary comments do not constitute a comprehensive assessment of the challenges of establishing a fund raising effort TMI has had access to consultants who can provide that advice

In comparison to many international environmental and development groups, TMI is very fortunate in having a clear market niche (mountains), very strong potential appeal to an identifiable group (e g , outdoor environmentalists) and a very attractive program mix that can be packaged and presented in an appealing manner (culture, community, conservation)

TMI's efforts to get a development program up and running are hampered by inexperience, small size and because it has had to start from scratch in organizing its development effort In addition, the remote headquarters location and the absence of a central, integrated office has created logistical difficulties TMI is just large enough to warrant a development office but not large enough to finance one without the perception of considerable programmatic sacrifice ²⁹

Internally, TMI needs to devote more discussion to what a development office does, its operational and policy role *vis-a-vis* the constituent parts and the implications with regard to the autonomy of the field units As noted below, the establishment of a development office does inevitably imply the centralization of

²⁸ See the Management of Fund Raising, for InterAction 1989, by C Stark Biddle

²⁹ In part for this reason TMI attempted to ameliorate the budgetary pain of a development office by making the unfortunate decision to link the establishment of that office to the goal of having it pay for itself within a designated time period This was unfortunate because it gave the development function a short term focus, implied the independent and transitory nature of development and armed those who were concerned with centralization with a perfect argument to jettison the initiative when it ran into trouble

certain functions and responsibilities related to fund raising. This can create (and has created) internal tensions that will impede the integration of the development function into the mainstream of the organization.

TMI's approach to development put considerable emphasis on the design of a strategy that reflected the organization's identity and values and its unique way of processing information and managing relationships. While the intent was laudable, in hindsight the evaluation team believes that it would have been preferable if TMI had started with a more traditional and limited approach and grown from a more grounded experiential base.

In the long-run, there are three fundamental issues that TMI will need to deal with in structuring a development office and designing a fund raising strategy. These are

Learning to take a careful sustained long run approach Development involves the cultivation of relationships and the building of confidence. This takes considerable time. Development offices are often set up in response to a financial emergency and their performance is linked to immediate financial return. Not only is this likely to fail, but it may alienate potential contributors who would have been significant supporters if the cultivation process had been extended.³⁰ The importance of a long run approach needs to be built into the design and structure of the development office.

Defining the role of the center The establishment of a central development office inevitably involves the imposition of some degree of strategic discipline over the constituent parts of the organization. While it is true that everyone is involved in fund raising, it is not true that everyone can raise funds for whatever appears to be individually attractive. It is the fundamental job of the development office to develop a game plan, recommend fund raising priorities and keep everyone informed of how the effort is going. Inevitably, the central development office will concentrate on raising the discretionary funds needed to keep headquarters afloat and to support services that backstop the field - - although it would be a considerable waste of resources to limit the development office solely to the raising of discretionary money. From the field's perspective, the efforts of the development office may be of low or even negative marginal utility. These issues have been particularly problematic with TMI because the role of headquarters is poorly defined, the field units operate with

³⁰ It is the *personal* view of the team leader of the evaluation that TMI needs to be very cautious in applying the terminology and approach of *appreciative inquiry* to fund raising. This is not to suggest that AI has not been useful internally and in the design of community training programs. However, the tone and language of AI can inadvertently convey a level of simplicity and lack of content that can undermine the credibility of the development effort.

considerable autonomy and the mandate of the new development office was laid out in broad and ambitious terms

The development of a convincing case statement derived from a solid long-range plan of action The single most critical component of effective fund raising - - whether foundation, corporate or individual - - is the coherence and binding structure that is derived from a clear conception of what the organization does and where it is heading. As stressed throughout this report, TMI needs to devote considerable effort to the development of an operational long-range plan

Better Financial Systems

TMI has made considerable progress in developing effective financial systems and controls including a budget planning and management system, a monthly financial reporting process, design and approval of fiscal policies and procedures and the development of a semi-annual work planning process. The accounting system has been upgraded and improvements have been made to computer hardware and software. Finally, a basis has been established to link financial reporting to the M&E process when that system is in place.

Importantly, TMI has employed a Chief Financial Officer who has brought with him an emphasis on structure, systems, accountability and financial strategy. The addition of this capability and the construction of financial monitoring and oversight systems will help immensely in the formulation of a sound growth strategy. While the addition of a professional CFO was a wise and necessary decision, it does and will continue to present to central management the challenge of balancing a structural financial perspective against the importance that TMI program staff place on autonomy, self-reliance and independence.

Section 6 Findings

This section sets forth a series of principal findings that emerge from the preceding discussion. This section does not attempt to repeat all of the material set forth in previous sections.

Organizational attributes

- TMI is a young, energetic, growing and somewhat fragile organization that is experiencing considerable change in program direction, management style, governance and leadership
- At the same time, TMI has a long and rich history, a valuable set of traditions, a unique and attractive identity that derives from its focus on mountains, its unusual location and its appealing mix of domestic and international activities. As a consequence, TMI is potentially well positioned to delineate a clear market niche for itself that will be attractive to foundations and official development agencies and to private and corporate funders
- TMI has come through a difficult transition involving a leadership change, a shift in program direction with an emphasis on international conservation and a gradual tightening of systems and standardized procedures associated with growth and professionalization. However, the vestiges of the transition are still influential and there is considerable internal discussion and debate with regard to future direction, structure and operating style
- TMI aspires to be a world leader in the broad area of mountain ecology and community development and has embarked on a difficult and demanding process of maturation and organizational change involving program growth, program diversification, an increase in the relative importance of international activities, cultivation of new partnerships and alliances, the introduction of new techniques, and the strengthening of the board and the building of a sustaining financial base. This is an ambitious agenda and success will depend very heavily on the capacity of the organization to establish priorities in a sequenced and strategic manner
- In the last three years, TMI has devoted considerable constructive effort to building an integrated organizational identity and culture, to improving internal communication and organizational consensus, as well as to establishing the systems, procedures and controls that will be essential if TMI is to become a mature and viable international PVO
- As an organization, TMI staff place considerable value on participation and consensus and devote a great deal of time to the *process* of decision making. Many of the staff at TMI have adopted the principles of appreciative inquiry with its emphasis on positive

affirmation While these preferences reinforce organizational loyalty, they consume a considerable amount of time and effort, slow down decision-making and may augment an overall impression of scattered and diffuse focus

The USAID/PVC grant

- The Matching Grant has been of immense transitional value by providing stability, maneuvering room and the resources needed to build organizational cohesion following a difficult leadership transition In addition, the grant allowed TMI to diversify its program, complete a definitive transition to an international approach and establish an experiential basis for subsequent program planning and development
- The fact that the grant has been administered in a flexible and adaptive manner permitting modification in grant objectives during implementation was fully appropriate and consistent with TMI's broad organizational purpose At the same time, flexibility with regard to the grant's objectives has made it difficult to monitor progress against original intent, particularly with regard to broad organizational goals
- In retrospect, the institutional components of the grant might have had greater impact had they been predicated on and followed from a more explicit strategic planning effort with grant funds being used to deal with issues, bottlenecks and needs identified by that effort (However, whether or not TMI two years ago was at a sufficiently cohesive point to embark on an institution-wide planning process is questionable)
- Finally, the grant proposal and the Detailed Implementation Plan periodically employed fashionable terminology and exaggerated phrasing that suggested a comprehensiveness and depth of impact that was slightly misleading This needs to be guarded against in subsequent grant applications

Organizational and program strategy

- While TMI's scope is limited to mountainous regions and to the triple themes of conservation, culture and community, the organization's interests and programs span a broad and diverse thematic landscape that includes park planning, community development, capacity building and a diverse assortment of field activities that run the gamut from mountain safety to bio-system monitoring of vulnerable natural areas While this diversity of interests is responsive to variable country conditions, it makes it difficult for TMI to build a distinctive comparative advantage and maximize the impact of scarce program resources
- In a related vein, TMI's geographically dispersed organizational structure, a deliberately modest role and set of functions for the center, a limited capability to evaluate and backstop the technical content of field activities and the absence of an

integrating strategic plan combine to pull the organization in too many directions and to make strategic focus difficult

- Despite TMI's identification with mountains and the elaboration of the core principles embedded in conservation, community and culture, TMI's basic organizational purpose needs greater clarity and TMI's field activities need greater conceptual integration
- While there is considerable benefit in adapting projects to special, country-specific circumstances and placing high respect on community priorities, TMI would have greater impact if more attention were given to the design and application of a modular approach that embodies a distinctive design rooted in TMI's unique experience base
- While TMI's international projects are very well managed and are achieving intended objectives, future impact will be dependent on the design of strategies that will increase structural or systemic impact and thereby address concerns regarding cost effectiveness
- It is very important to stress that during the last two years, TMI has made considerable progress in defining organizational ideology and in clarifying basic values and beliefs. The groundwork has been established for a much more focused strategic planning effort that will concentrate on program purpose, core competencies and basic operating approach

The TMI organizational structure

- TMI needs to more clearly define the role and function of the center with regard to field programs. Currently TMI does not have a strong programmatic center that provides technical and intellectual support and direction to field units. While the current structure may be workable in the short run, it will tend to perpetuate program diversification and make it difficult for TMI to formulate a distinctive model
- As a corollary, TMI needs to identify mechanisms for providing more managerial support to program staff as part of a gradual effort to bring all elements of the program into better alignment and to encourage the design of projects with a stronger analytical and strategic underpinning. The evaluation team believes this can be done in a manner that does not undercut program effectiveness
- TMI needs to directly address the deficiencies of the "virtual office." While the TMI leadership deserves substantial credit for structuring a workable system and for devising effective communication procedures that help address the organization's highly decentralized operating style, the cumulative effect of the centrifugal forces noted above places very real strains on the organization and makes it doubly difficult to forge a clear strategic approach. While a diversified geographic structure might be

workable if all other institutional attributes were working to pull the organization together, it is problematic in the current situation

Performance against grant expectations

Country projects

- The field projects funded under the grant have been successful in supporting achievement of the *goal* of the grant, which is to increase in-country capacity to design and manage conservation programs. However, the ambitious “bio-diversity” language in the Matching Grant and some of the implicit emphasis on structural or systemic impact established a set of expectations that is more ambitious than TMI - - with the possible exception of Sikkim - - has been able to achieve to date
- TMI is on track generally with regard to accomplishing specific, explicit *objectives* envisioned in the DIP
- TMI has demonstrated energy and imagination in designing and “jump starting” field level activities in remote and difficult locations
- TMI has done an exceptional job in establishing close collaborative relationships, working with and empowering communities, collaborating effectively with government entities and developing effective training programs combining the best of rural appraisal and appreciative inquiry techniques
- Aside from a common focus on mountains, TMI projects are diverse. Individually they are meritorious but as a group highly differentiated ³¹
- While the individual activities are worthwhile and positive, the cost of operating in remote areas is quite high and the cost-benefit ratio is not attractive if benefits are measured solely on the basis of direct impact on beneficiary groups. TMI appears to be aware of this challenge and will benefit from support for initiatives that will deliberately exploit opportunities that will have a systemic impact. In a related vein, TMI is good at getting an activity up and running but needs to be more proactive in the design and application of sequential project strategy that will have a structural impact and include a graduation strategy
- TMI is adaptive and stakeholder driven in project implementation. TMI does not have a “model” in the usual formulaic sense of that word. While an emphasis on community empowerment is desirable and effective, TMI can do more to define what it does in a modular and standardized fashion that permits and encourages critical

³¹ TMI staff disagree with this assessment and argue that all three country programs have a tight focus on community development and employ a similar approach of stakeholder participation

analysis, that provides a tangible basis for assessing performance and establishes a sound basis for long term institutional growth

- TMI is still at the stage where it focuses on the “delivery of services” rather than on structural or systemic change. Gradually, TMI will need to place greater analytical emphasis on issues of replication, sustainability and cost effectiveness
- In general, TMI needs to deepen and strengthen its analytical capacity and to accord greater importance to a critical/analytical assessment of its work. This implies a deeper understanding of environmental issues prior to project launch, a tougher approach to sustainability, impact, cost recovery and replicability, more attention to what is in the pipeline after the facilitation and empowerment is over, a better understanding of economic incentives and disincentives, and a strategic approach to project design and implementation

Headquarters

- TMI has made considerable progress in designing and installing integrated financial systems and controls and a centralized budgeting capability
- Similarly, the grant has given TMI the resources to strengthen internal communications, build organizational consensus and deal with difficult transitions, TMI has benefited from more frequent staff interactions and from the advice of organizational consultants. Much of the basic work on valuing and visioning has been accomplished and TMI is now at a point where it can engage in operational planning
- An important board development process has been initiated and needs to continue. Inevitably this will involve a process of sorting out roles and functions and a gradual emergent understanding of the difference between operations and policy. The board needs to have a deeper understanding of TMI’s new directions, spend an increasing level of effort on strategic planning, and continue to become more deeply engaged in fund raising and financial strategy
- Despite considerable effort, TMI has not designed and installed a basic monitoring and evaluation system. Progress in this regard will hinge to a considerable degree on the preparation of a strategic plan and on the elaboration of a TMI model or at least on stronger consensus with regard to the common elements of the TMI approach
- TMI has established a development office and has begun to fashion a fund-raising strategy with mixed results. Some important rethinking is currently underway based on experience to date

- While TMI has made progress in facilitating the internal exchange of information, a deeper level of organizational learning will and can occur if there is a stronger analytical capacity

Section 7 Recommendations

While the evaluation team notes that there is a long list of large and small recommendations that emerge from the previous discussion, it prefers to concentrate on three principal points that it believes are of pivotal long-term importance to TMI

- 1 **Strategy** The central recommendation of this evaluation is that TMI needs to initiate a careful program planning exercise that will clarify organizational purpose and more clearly delineate areas of core competence and approach. The team believes that the benefits to TMI of a tighter and more structured programmatic focus would be considerable and would include the gradual emergence of a distinctive TMI model, increased program synergy, better internal communication and stronger support for an effective development effort
- 2 **Structure** The second recommendation of this evaluation is that TMI needs to take steps to insert an increased quantity of managerial “glue” to hold the organization together, accelerate decision making, support overseas projects and staff, and manage the increasingly complex systems of a growing, diversified international non-profit. While the team is respectful of the need for program independence and understands both the anxiety associated with a strong central office and the allure of the “virtual” alternative, the team believes that TMI is at that point in its organizational life where a greater degree of supportive direction is warranted and necessary
- 3 **Analysis** The final recommendation of this evaluation is that TMI needs to take steps to improve its analytical capacity at all levels of the organization. This goes beyond “sharing the learning” and involves analytical support for the planning effort, assistance in project design, backstopping of regional offices in their efforts to forge long-range plans and, finally, the nurturing of the intellectual capital of the organization in preparation for future program initiatives

Attachments

- 1 Scope of Work
- 2 List of Individuals Interviewed
- 3 Analytical Questions

The Mountain Institute/USAID-BHR-PVC

SCOPE OF WORK

Final Evaluation of The Mountain Institute's

**"Strengthening NGO, Government, and Private Sector Capabilities
for Community-Based Biodiversity Conservation Programs in the
Andes and Himalaya"**

Cooperative Agreement No FAO-158-A-00-5028-00

1 Introduction

Between 1972 and 1993, The Mountain Institute (TMI) primarily pursued its mission of "protecting mountain environments, advancing mountain cultures" within the Himalayan and Appalachian mountain regions. Over this twenty year period, a rich experience base was developed as a result of TMI's innovative conservation and development programs in Nepal, Tibet, and West Virginia. These resultant "TMI models" were largely founded on the active testing, refinement, and blending of participatory approaches to environmental conservation, community development, and promotion of indigenous cultures.

By 1993, a desire to more effectively share and disseminate the many lessons learned in Asia and North America, increase organizational and professional capacity, and expand programs to other regions of the mountain world led to a new phase of institutional planning and development. The following year, TMI was awarded a three-year Matching Grant by USAID/BHR/PVC in support of "Strengthening NGO, Government, and Private Sector Capabilities for Community-Based Biodiversity Conservation Programs in the Andes and Himalaya". The grant has represented an unprecedented opportunity for TMI to launch new conservation and development initiatives within the Andes and Himalaya while directly strengthening Headquarter capabilities within the Appalachians.

The \$1,500,000 Matching Grant was awarded in October, 1995, with the life-of-project defined as the period between October 1995 and October 1998. In view of the accelerated activities and accomplishments of the field and HQ components, this final evaluation has been scheduled for the end of the second year of the grant award (August through October, 1997) in order to provide field personnel with professional, external feedback regarding progress and overall effectiveness achieved to date.

2 Goal and Purpose of the Project (*as per existing documentation and terminology*)

The **goal** of the program is to “increase in-country NGO, government, and private sector capacity to design, implement, and monitor effective community-based biodiversity conservation programs in the Himalaya and Andes in ways which result in empowered stakeholders, more effective conservation programs, and significantly improved conservation of mountain biodiversity and cultures” (*Cooperative Agreement, 4 August, 1995, Attachment 4*)

The **purposes** of the program fall under two categories, i.e., “**International**” (Nepal, India, Peru) and “**Domestic**” (The Mountain Institute, WV)

The **International** purpose is “to enhance The Mountain Institute’s capacity to plan and manage international biodiversity conservation projects, develop and apply new biodiversity conservation skills, increase collaboration between The Mountain Institute, NGOs, and other stakeholders, increase local participation in program design and implementation, enhance strategies for sustainability, increase areas under protection/conservation, and increase stakeholders’ income generating activities” (*Cooperative Agreement, 4 August, 1995, Attachment 4*)

The **Domestic** purpose is to “enhance The Mountain Institute’s headquarters capacity to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between mountain areas, test the transferability of successful biodiversity conservation models already implemented (by TMI in Nepal) to other targeted countries, effectively monitor and evaluate program results, provide training to international partners in M&E, financial management, fundraising techniques, technical and social skills, develop U S and international markets for mountain community enterprise, work with tourism agencies toward the development of sound ecotourism principles, provide training, international exchange, and conference opportunities to international partners at the Institute’s teaching campus in West Virginia, develop and test new models for sustainability of The Mountain Institute” (*Cooperative Agreement, 4 August, 1995, Attachment 4*)

The “**Principle Activities**” designed to facilitate accomplishment of the goal and purpose, as identified in the original proposal’s Logical Framework (22 November, 1994, Attachment 2) Cooperative Agreement (4 August, 1995) include

- “* Plan and carry out country-specific planning seminars at the Program’s inception,
- * Work with appropriate host government official, local NGOs, and communities to develop stakeholder strategies and Management/Operational plans,
- * Enhance skills and capacities of key participating stakeholders through headquarters and country-specific training workshops and activities focussed on planning/management skills and income-generating mechanisms,
- * Improve the quality of technical assistance delivered through increased stakeholder

access to multi-country experience,

* Increase the capacity of The Mountain Institute to implement and monitor international biodiversity conservation programs through ongoing refinement of lessons learned, and

* Develop a detailed phased plan for the long-term financial sustainability of The Mountain Institute (this will be addressed in Headquarters and country-specific training workshops)”

3. Purpose of the Evaluation

The primary purpose of the final evaluation is to analyze and assess The Mountain Institute’s progress in achieving program goals and objectives as stated in the Cooperative Agreement (August 1995), Detailed Implementation Plan (March 1996), and First Year Annual Report (October 1996)

4 Evaluation Questions

The Program has four major integrated components

Peru building capacities of community organizations, government, the private sector, and NGOs to design, implement, and monitor natural and cultural resource conservation programs in and around the Huascarán National Park, Huaraz, Peru (*Huascarán National Park Conservation and Buffer Zone Development Project*) Project Officers Jake Kosek, Alton Byers, Jorge Recharte, Miriam Torres

Nepal strengthening Nepal’s capacity to design, implement, and monitor ecotourism programs in the Langtang National Park, Nepal (*Langtang Ecotourism Project*) Project Officers Wendy Lama, Bob Davis, Durga Poudyel

India enhancing indigenous capacity and generating economic incentives to conserve the natural and cultural heritage at key nature sites within Sikkim (*Sikkim Biodiversity and Ecotourism Project*) Project Officers Nandita Jain and Renzino Lepcha

TMI Headquarters strengthening institutional capabilities in the priority areas of (a) *Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation* (“developing an exemplary institution-wide system for participatory and analytical planning, monitoring and evaluation which increases TMI’s capacity to serve the mountain community”), (b) *Partnerships and Alliances* (“fostering strategic collaboration between TMI and other groups as an effective means to increase the range and impact of programs”), (c) *Sharing the Learning* (“to better serve the mountain community by sharing information internally and

externally in ways which reflect the institute's values of transparency, accuracy, and wholism", and (d) ***Financial Sustainability/Institutional Development*** ("implementing an Institutional Development Office capacity and infrastructure for TMI while strengthening TMI's Board of Trustees") Project Officers Gabriel Campbell (M&E), Jim Underwood (Partnerships & Alliances), Suzanne Warzinsky and John Eckman (Sharing the Learning), Jane Pratt, Alton Byers, and Suzanne Warzinsky (Institutional Development)

For the present evaluation, the above components are considered to fall within two inter-related categories ***Institutional Development*** and ***Field Implementation***. A third category, ***Cross-Programmatic Opportunities***, raises significant and relevant issues which go beyond the confines of this specific grant

4.1 Institutional Development

A key objective of the Matching Grant Program is to facilitate the internal development of The Mountain Institute as a world-class conservation and development organization. Institutional objectives as stated in the original Matching Grant proposal (Section B7, Goals) include

- (1) enhanced organizational/professional growth and effectiveness,
- (2) programmatic expansion into other mountain regions of the world,
- (3) increased international leadership in mountain environmental, cultural, and socio-economic issues,
- (4) the attainment of a sustainable financial base, and
- (5) the development of the Spruce Knob Mountain Center into an international mountain demonstration, teaching, training, and research center

The Matching Grant program was designed to assist The Mountain Institute in the realization of these important goals by providing

- (a) increased opportunities for staff organizational, management, and technical skills training [Items 1&2, above],
- (b) expanded international program experience and responsibility [Items 1-3, above],
- (c) opportunities to disseminate, test, and refine existing and promising mountain conservation strategies [Items 2-3, above],

(d) opportunities to systematically pursue long-term funding strategies and options such as membership programs, endowments, and new core funding sources [Item 4, above], and

(e) opportunities to involve international country program participants in future Spruce Knob teaching campus exchange and training initiatives

Draft Draft Draft Draft Draft

This evaluation will assess the progress made within the Institutional Development component by considering the following questions

1 The structure and strategy for the Institutional Development component was largely a result of a managers retreat held in April, 1995, prior to notification of the Matching Grant award "Monitoring and Evaluation", "Partnerships and Alliances", "Sharing the Learning", and "Development" were isolated as the key components necessary for effective institutional growth and development Two years later, how relevant does this overall approach appear to be? What strengthened or new directions, if needed, would facilitate TMI's development goals?

2 Goals, objectives, activities, and time lines were determined for each of the institutional components and are shown in the Detailed Implementation Plan (March 1996) For each component, what progress has been made toward the achievement of their respective goals and objectives? How useful have the "performance indicators" proven to be in terms of measuring impact and change? Have the projects been successful at capturing and utilizing unanticipated successes?

3 What progress has been made toward strengthening TMI's financial accounting and reporting capabilities? What lessons have been learned of value to the establishment of new country initiatives? How has the strengthening of TMI's financial management capabilities improved reporting and accountability with in on-going country programs?

4 What progress was made toward Board of Trustees development? How has this facilitated institutional strengthening?

5 TMI has been an active participant in the Global Excellence in Management (GEM) program funded through a Cooperative Agreement from USAID's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation How have the various skills of the GEM approach been utilized by TMI staff and Programs? What impact has this approach had on the institute? How has the GEM approach been incorporated, and/or modified, by TMI personnel both in the U S and abroad?

6 During the past two years, what other TMI initiatives have been launched in support of its institutional development objectives (these may include activities which are directly a result of the PVO grant, influenced or leveraged by the PVO grant, and/or independent of the PVO

grant)?

4.2 Field Implementation

The Matching Grant has been designed to support The Mountain Institute in improving and expanding the impact of its mountain conservation and development programs in Latin America and Asia. This evaluation will visit three country projects--Peru, Nepal, and India--where it will consider the following questions:

1. What has been the overall progress towards achieving new country program objectives? What has been successful, and what lessons have been learned? What constraints have been encountered, and how have they been dealt with?
2. How have the Peru, India, and Nepal programs enhanced TMI's capacity to plan and manage international biodiversity conservation projects? develop and apply new biodiversity conservation skills? increase collaboration between TMI and government/non-government stakeholders? increase local participation in program design and implementation? enhance strategies for sustainability? increase areas under protection/conservation? increase stakeholder income generating activities?
3. How are the program- and project-level impacts evaluated?
4. What is the nature and quality of the support needed and received from TMI Headquarters? Do field personnel feel that they are part of exciting, functioning teams of professionals, both at the project-level as well as institutionally?
5. How do the programs relate to USAID and its local priorities?
6. What have been the unanticipated successes of the country programs? How/why did they occur, and what are their implications for current program status and future plans?
7. Do future plans, if they exist, for expansion both in-country and/or to neighboring mountain countries build upon and incorporate the strengths and successes of current projects?

4.3 Cross-Programmatic Opportunities (Optional. for example only)

1. What opportunities have been pursued regarding cross-programmatic/international exchange? What have been the results of these exchanges? How might this impact future project design?
2. In what ways can Andean, Asian, and Appalachian Programs work together to facilitate institutional as well as programmatic goals and objectives? What has already been accomplished?

along these lines?

5 Evaluation Methods and Procedures

5.1 Evaluation Team Composition

The evaluation team will be comprised of three core team members: the AID/PVO Project Officer, AID/PVO project evaluation specialist, and an external evaluator (nominated by TMI and approved by the AID/PVO Project Officer). TMI country program representatives will accompany the evaluation team throughout the duration of specific country visits. All participants must be in reasonable physical condition as 4-6 day treks in mountainous, roadless terrain are required for the Nepal and India country evaluations, and visits to high altitude sites in Peru (12,000' +) will also be necessary to fully understand and appreciate project progress.

The external evaluator will serve as the Evaluation Team Leader and will be the primary author of the final report. Other team members will be expected to provide written summaries on specific areas of focus/expertise as determined by the Evaluation Team Leader. One TMI/HQ representative will be the primary TMI contact person for the evaluation, will coordinate logistical arrangements, and provide technical expertise as required.

The external evaluator and Team Leader will be a senior development professional with extensive conservation and development experience in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and North America. S(he) will have significant prior experience in the organization and management of U.S. international development PVOs. S(he) will hold an advanced degree in management, international development, or related discipline, be a skilled writer, and have prior experience with USAID evaluations.

5.2 Evaluation Schedule

The anticipated schedule for the evaluation is

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Document review, preliminary planning, and questionnaire preparation	26-30 May
Team planning and HQ interviews in Franklin, WV	2-6 June
Travel to Peru	24 August-7 Sept
Travel to Nepal and India	14 Sept-3 Oct

Draft Report completed	17 October
Discussions in Franklin	20-21 October
Final Report completed	31 October
Final debriefing in Franklin	To be determined

The evaluation process shall begin with a review of basic grant and program documents. This will be followed by four days of planning, discussion, and interviews with key TMI personnel and Board members in Franklin, WV. An outside facilitator may be used in the early planning stages. While in Franklin, the team will have access to materials relevant to accounting, budgeting, planning, project implementation, and management.

During this early planning phase, the team will focus and define the evaluation questions in this Scope of Work, creating a detailed and pragmatic evaluation plan responsive to the evaluation's main purpose.

5.3 Project Documentation

As part of its overall orientation to The Mountain Institute and this Matching Grant, the Evaluation Team shall have access to a range of relevant project and organizational documentation. Among these shall be:

- TMI's Matching Grant proposal (November, 1994)
- The Matching Grant Cooperative Agreement (August, 1995)
- The Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) (March 1995)
- The First Year Annual Report (October 1995)
- Quarterly Reports for all Matching Grant components (Oct 1995-present)
- Country Program and HQ Publications, Brochures, and Working Papers
- Planning and Policy Documents
- Reports, Proceedings, and/or Documentation produced during international workshops at the Spruce Knob Mountain Center
- Financial Policies and Procedures Documents

6.0 Report Format

The report shall be concise (no more than 50 single-spaced, typewritten pages), appropriately organized, and to-the-point. The presentation of the final report should be guided by the basic outline shown below:

51

Title Page
List of Acronyms (if necessary)
AID Evaluation Summary Report
Executive Summary (under 5 pages)
Table of Contents (with Appendices, Figures, and Tables)
Main Report (organized in accordance with evaluation questions in SOW)
Appendices
Appendix 1 Scope of Work
Appendix 2 Evaluation Team Itinerary
Appendix 3 Individuals Contacted
Appendix 4 References Consulted
Appendix 5 (As needed)

Attachment # 2

Partial List of Individuals Interviewed¹

The Mountain Institute

Brewer Lama, Ms Wendy, Program Associate
Browning, Mr David, Chief Financial Officer
Byers, Dr Alton, Senior Conservationist
Byers, Ms Elizabeth, Conservation Mapping Specialist
Campbell, Dr Gabriel, Director Asian Environmental Programs
Castro, Dr Juan, Co-Manager, HNP Project
Cerdan, Ms Miriam, Program Assistance
Davis, Mr Robert, Senior Program Officer
Espie, Mr Jason, Program Officer
Jain, Dr Nandita, Sikkim Project Director
Kolff, Mr Adam, Program Assistance
Kosek, Mr Jake, Program Manager
Lepcha, Mr Renzino, Sikkim Field Director
Meza, Ms Isabel, Program Assistant, Peru
Mick, Ms Carol, Financial Manager
Murillo, Mr Pedro, Program Assistant
O'Brien, Ms Daniel, Technology Specialist
Odell, Mr Malcolm J, Himal Program Staff
Penniston, Mr Brian, Nepal Program Staff
Pratt, Dr Jane, President and CEO
Preston, Ms Lynelle, Program Assistant
Recharte, Dr Jorge, Andes Program Director
Shreve, Ms Lee Ann, Program Assistant, Peru
Tohan, Mr Ankur, Program Assistant
Torres, Ms Miriam, Co-Manager, HNP Project
Underwood, Mr James, Director Appalachian Programs
Warsinsky, Ms Suzanne, Advancement Officer

¹ The evaluation team met with a large number of village leaders, lodge owners, tourist groups. These were informal group sessions and it was not possible to collect the names of individual participants

Trustees

Armbrecht, Mr Edward C
Coles, Mr Julius E
Eastman, Mr Thomas B
Whitby, Mr Robert H

NGOs, Government Officials, Others

Camino, Alejandro Mr , USAID/Peru
Davis, Mr Alan L , USAID/Nepal
Lama, Mrs Ganesh, SAGUN
Lozano, Mr Luis Alfaro, Director General of Natural Areas, Institute of Natural
Resources, Peru
Pollock, Mr Fred, USAID/Nepal
Portillo, Ms Maria del Carmen, Dutch Embassy, Peru
Poudel, Mr Durga, Senior Conservation Ranger, Langtang Park
Pradhan, Mr Narendra, Chief Warden Langtang Park
Rai, Dr S C , Scientist GB Pant Institute
Sharma, Dr Eklabya, Scientist-in-Charge, GB Pant Institute
Sharma, Dr Uday, Director General of Department of National Parks and
Wildlife Conservation
Sherpa, Ms Lamu C Mountain Spirit/Nepal
Sundriyal, Dr R C , Scientist-in-Charge, GB Pant Institute

Attachment # 3

The Mountains Institute Evaluation Questions

In any evaluation there are generally two sets of questions. One set deals with tangible *performance outcomes* and compares what has happened to what was expected to have happened. In the case of the grant to the Mountain Institute, the specific expectations are set forth with reasonable clarity in the four sections of the Detailed Implementation Plan that deal with the four principal program areas: Peru, Nepal, Sikkim and Headquarters Strengthening. The evaluation will address progress toward each of the specific sets of objectives, some of which are presented in terms of quantitative accomplishments.

Where the intent is to build institutional capacity, there is a second set of questions that address the attributes of institutional growth and maturity that are frequently difficult to quantify and that, while not enumerated in the grant document, are fundamentally at the core of original intent. While there is considerable overlap between these two sets of questions, the distinction is useful because an exclusive focus on outcomes can ignore valuable lessons while a sole focus on the intangible and unexpected ignores the importance of reasonable compliance.

What follows are a series of “analytical questions” that are designed to assist in our evaluation of the Matching Grant to the Mountain Institute. By and large, these questions fall into the second category - - i.e. they are less concerned with accountability than with overall institutional capacity, although there is obviously and importantly a close connection. The purpose of these questions is threefold. The first is to focus and channel our inquiry. The second is to suggest ways of thinking about organizational performance that will be helpful in assessing progress. The third is to provide an informal “interview guide” so that the evaluation team is pursuing a more or less standardized set of core questions and issues in our discussions. The questions are neither comprehensive or necessarily in priority order and there is, of necessity, some duplication and overlap.

It is important to emphasize that the following questions need to be posed and considered in the context of the fundamental goal of the grant which is to “increase in-country NGO, government and private sector *capacity* to design, implement and monitor effective community based biodiversity conservation programs.” Thus, in an important sense the operative intent of this grant is embodied in the word “capacity” and much of the work of the evaluation will focus on whether and to what extent that has been accomplished.

The framework is divided into the two basic purpose categories of the grant: international and domestic (or headquarters).

I. International (or programmatic)

The TMI model - - general

To what extent has the grant helped TMI develop a *distinctive* approach to mountain conservation and community development?

Has the grant helped TMI *articulate, refine and advance* its model approach to working with mountain communities?

Is the TMI model effectively *adapted* to the needs and characteristics of different situations?

Is there a balanced and synergistic relationship between the *applied* components of the TMI model? (Conceptual and practical integrity) (See below)

Has the TMI model been presented and adapted in a manner that will increase the likelihood of *automatic self replication*?

Is the TMI model and approach to working with mountain communities *sustainable* in the sense that it can be adopted and applied by indigenous institutions in a cost effective manner?

Is TMI working strategically with local organizations to *transfer knowledge* and understanding of the TMI model and approach to mountain conservation?

Does TMI have an adequate *understanding* of the institutional strengths and weaknesses of its local partners?

Does TMI have a *systematic approach* to assessing local institutional capacity?

Has the grant helped TMI augment its *ability* to respond to the institutional needs of its local partners?

Has the grant helped TMI identify, refine and install *indicator measurement systems* that are helpful to managers?

Has the grant helped TMI take “lessons learned” from one country context and adapt and apply them to another and/or to a refinement in generic approach?

Has the grant helped TMI develop a cost effective *evaluation system* that is used, respected and a source of organizational learning?

The TMI model - - components and effectiveness

Environmental Conservation

How has the grant helped TMI improve its *appropriate and relevant* knowledge of the general environment in each individual country situation (We can assess this from e g asking about TMI's local knowledge of biodiversity, vegetation, geology, etc)

How has the grant helped TMI improve its *appropriate and relevant* knowledge of specific conservation issues in each individual country ? (We can assess this from e g asking about species, vegetation, and sites that are at risk and determining whether causes have been identified and remedial actions planned or implemented)

How has the grant helped TMI formulate *appropriate and relevant* in-country strategies for dealing with identified environmental conservation issues?

Community Participation

Has the grant helped TMI refine and improve its approach to community based environmental conservation in a balanced and cost effective manner?

How has the grant helped TMI deepen its practical understanding of the dynamics of stakeholder relationships including structure, hierarchy, influence and conflicts?

Has the grant helped TMI improve its ability to work with multiple stakeholders in order to achieve desired outcomes that reflect local knowledge and values and rely on community participation?

Is the application of the technique of "appreciative inquiry" done in a balanced and realistic fashion and does this approach to community decision making appear to be effective?

Has TMI been able to *bridge* between a "bottom up" community based approach and a "top down" sensitivity and responsiveness to national policies?

Social and Economic Welfare

Has the grant helped TMI improve its *appropriate and relevant knowledge* of local economic activity and its positive or negative impact on environmental conservation?

Has the grant helped TMI improve its *appropriate and relevant knowledge* of social welfare needs?

Has the grant helped TMI identify and develop *strategies* for the introduction of *alternative* forms of employment?

Has the grant enhanced TMI's capacity to work with local communities to *adopt* these alternative and environmentally sensible forms of livelihood?

Does TMI have adequate in-country staff capacity to research, design and "market" alternative economic strategies in effected areas?

Has the grant helped TMI identify and establish constructive points of intersection between employment goals, social welfare goals and environmental conservation goals?

Policy Dialogue

Has the grant helped TMI develop an *appropriate and relevant understanding* of the major policy constraints to community based environmental conservation in those countries where TMI works?

Has TMI been able to establish the necessary *network* of contacts and relationships that are needed to influence the policy process

Has TMI been able to develop an appropriate *advocacy style* that is likely to be effective in those countries where TMI works?

Has TMI been able to *translate* its field experience and technical knowledge into relevant policy judgments and recommendations?

II. Domestic (or institutional)

A broad purpose of the grant was the generic strengthening of TMI as an institution While the grant supports specific activities (a long range financial plan, a institution wide evaluation system) underlying the specifics was a broader conception of more effective,

viable and dynamic organization The following series of questions attempts to suggest a framework for getting at the issue of strengthened institutional capacity

Strategic focus Has the grant helped TMI develop a sharper, more coherent strategic focus on what it does and how it does it?

Does TMI have an effective *planning process*?

Is there broad consensus within the organization with respect to *organizational values*, goals and approach?

Is there broad consensus within the organization with respect to *operating definitions*, terminology and the componentry of the TMI model?

Has TMI been able to balance between the importance of focus on the one hand and *adaptation* on the other?

Do the diverse elements of the TMI portfolio complement and fit together in an organically related fashion?

Are future growth plans financially, programmatically and organizationally *realistic* and feasible?

Organizational Learning Has the grant helped TMI address internal barriers and constraints to organizational learning?

Is information openly and efficiently distributed and shared in a manner and form that is conducive to learning?

Is TMI learning process capable of a reasonable degree of iconoclastic thinking that constructively questions conventional wisdom and accepted truths - - can TMI periodically engage in "double loop" learning?

Have learning systems been established?

Leadership and participation Has the grant helped TMI mature and balance between the importance of participation and consensus on the one hand and leadership and managerial direction on the other

Is the nature and degree of managerial oversight appropriate to the needs and values of the organization?

Financial viability Has the grant helped TMI formulate a long range financial strategy that is consistent with and supportive of TMI's long range program strategy?

Human resources Has the grant helped TMI attract and develop the caliber and mix of human skills appropriate to what TMI does?

Is staff morale positive and energetic?

Are communications open and direct?

Are evaluation systems and professional development plans in place?

Are headquarters/field relations structured in a manner that effectively balances between the need for consistency and direction on the one hand and autonomy and adaptive flexibility on the other?

Governance Has the grant helped TMI strengthen its governance structure?

Does the board understand its role and function?

Is the composition and skill mix of the board appropriate to the long term needs and evolution of TMI?

External Relations Has the grant helped TMI forge a structure of long term relationships that will have the dual benefit of replicating what TMI does while providing a fabric of supporting institutional linkages